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Conference looks at Bible interpretation in a broken world

Bert Witvoet

TORONTO — A conference on interpreting the Bible with trust and suspicion is likely to arouse both of these in the participants — trust, because they usually have confidence in their own ability, and suspicion, because they wonder what theologians are up to now.

This year, the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS) challenged the Christian community to cast an eye of suspicion on the way people interpret the Bible. It did so by leading 150 scholars and would-be scholars through philosophical discussions of how Western concepts of domination and mastery have infiltrated Bible interpretations.

One keynote speaker, Walter Brueggemann of Colombia Theological Seminary, went even further: he thinks God

himself is, at times, suspect.

ICS senior member James Olthuis opened the conference with his address on "A Hermeneutic of Suspicion, a Hermeneutic of Trust." Olthuis cast a net of suspicion over two strategies for approaching the Bible: the mastery mode, which forces the text to deliver what the reader desires, and the *tabula rasa* mode which assumes that the reader simply submits to the Bible without any preconceived notions.

A third way

Olthuis called for another strategy which he dubbed the "hermeneutics of connectedness." No interpretation of the Bible is innocent, said Olthuis. Relying heavily on French thinker Jacques Derrida, he criticized those who say they



During the first evening of the ICS conference, a poetry and jazz performance by the Lonesome Monsters supported the conference theme of suspicion arising out of pain and suffering.

"simply read the Bible," calling such reading "naive and dangerous." "In the beginning

was hermeneutics," Olthuis said. Both the mastery approach and the "I simply read the Bible" approach quench the Spirit of God, said Olthuis.

Instead, he called for "a reading with." This reading is always done *with* the Spirit, *with* love, *with* the stranger, widow and orphan as context. That kind of reading always brings surprises and changes, said Olthuis. "It alters as it repeats and it repeats as it alters" the classical, traditional interpretations.

Free to reinterpret

Our reading is always a response to the ancient Yes of God that is behind the Scriptures, according to Olthuis. Our response is a Yes, Yes, a kind of "post-modern Amen." The first Yes, like a first reading, repeats the message or the classical interpretation; the second Yes

must be able to forget previous interpretations and read the passage as if for the first time, thus altering it in the light of our contemporary situation.

Olthuis called for exegetical freedom in the service of tradition, saying that we derive authority for such reading from the covenant promise that God's law is written in our hearts.

Suspicion is needed to bring us into "the wild and uncharted spaces of love."

Every hermeneutic is to be a pastoral hermeneutic — creative, not autonomous, said Olthuis. Quoting Matthew 13:52, he considered every Bible interpreter to be like a home owner "who brings out of his store-room new treasures as well as old."

A faithful exegesis is "a stammering of the heart rather than a See SUSPICION page 3...

Halifax-area churches appeal to youth with innovative 'Fred's'

Valerie Walker

HALIFAX — The evening service at All Nations Christian Reformed Church has ended. The last strains of the parting hymn drift toward the graceful domed ceiling as the worshippers move toward the door.

For the young people gathered outside the sanctuary, however, the night is young, and they check frequently to see if the evening crowd has dispersed. They are anxious to get on with a sound check. Sonia Baines, a local high school student, is busy stocking the balcony with balloons ready to pitch them down during the band's opening set.

"I'm so psyched," she exclaims, but expresses her relief that someone vetoed the oiled beach ball idea. "It was too gross."

Within half an hour, some 80 young people from the Halifax area will gather in the sanctuary

for "Temporarily Fred," a new youth ministry that has brought some of the area churches together in their attempt to innovatively present the gospel to young people.

The concept for a co-operative youth ministry came out of a prayer meeting of evangelical ministers who get together bi-weekly to support one another's ministries. The churches they pastor have had varying success with youth See FRED'S p. 2



Dropping balloons at a "Temporarily Fred" youth service.

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News

'Freds' charged with energy and fun

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ministry, and many expressed their enthusiasm for an event that would bring a larger number of kids together to experience

an event. A meeting of those with an interest and gifts for youth ministry produced a plan for the first event. Glenn Davis would provide the message. Mark

an evangelistic message, really lame jokes from M.C. Anthonie Jansen, prayers led by the young people who help organize Fred, and lots of pizza.

"Fred" posters have been put up in two schools, but most of the advertising is by word of mouth.

The first "Fred" was held on a Sunday afternoon in February. There was a good turnout, but the group included kids aged eight and up. The target audience was adolescent, and so the subsequent Fred was an evening affair. The attendance was a little bit lower, but the kids seemed to connect with the various presentations, including a drama about "hiding your Christianity," a message about drowning in contemporary problems and calling to Jesus for help (a la Peter walking on the water).

Growing connections

By the third "Fred," faces were beginning to look familiar and even the program was more of an in-house affair, with fewer presentations but more participation. Three boys who sat at the edge of the crowd for the first two events performed a rap number and the drummer from the band played a very skilled, almost crazed drum solo, to much applause.

Perhaps most encouraging were the connections that seem to be forming among the kids. The band jams while the pizza is served, and some kids stick around to hear the saxophone solo played by the cool guy who seems never to take off his sunglasses.

The atmosphere is always charged with energy and fun and, while there are always adults present, there is an obvious absence of adult "be on your best behavior — you're in

church" angst.

Youth-friendly appeal

"Fred" has been temporarily interrupted while the planning team searches frantically for a band to replace the recently departed university students. The last piece of the puzzle is a drummer, and if they can find one, there will be two "Freds" over the summer months after which Fred will appear biweekly again.

In the meantime, the planning

team is fine-tuning — defining goals and lining up speakers. The original idea was to provide a supplementary program for kids already attending church.

Glenn Davis says the planning team wants to ensure that the style "appeals to kids who would not attend a youth group." All of the people working on the project have a real love for young people and a keen sense of their need to hear the gospel and encounter Jesus, Davis asserts.



The key elements of every "Fred" include loud contemporary Christian music, balloons to bat around during the songs, an evangelistic message, really lame jokes, prayers, and lots of pizza.

worship and fellowship aimed directly at them. The pastors decided to meet again to make plans.

Glenn Davis, youth pastor at First Congregational Church, says that they very quickly realized that they were not the ones who should be planning such an

Richardson from Dalhousie (University) Christian Fellowship would assemble a band. All Nations CRC would provide the space.

Finding a name was harder. They brainstormed to no avail, and in good humored exasperation, one person said "Just call it 'Fred' — temporarily." When the first posters went up, they simply said "Fred is here" and gave the date, time and location. The name stuck and has become a noun in its own right. It's not a service, it's not a youth rally. It's "a Fred."

The key elements of every "Fred" are simple: loud contemporary Christian music, balloons to bat around during the songs,

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Halifax pastors break down walls of competition

Valerie Walker

HALIFAX — Ten years ago, four ministers from two Halifax churches, West End Baptist and St. Andrew's United, began meeting to pray together about the challenges and struggles in each one's ministry.

Doug Mott, now pastor of First Congregational Church, was one of the original members of the prayer group which now has 10 participants from seven churches. The pastors currently come from four denominational traditions (Anglican, Baptist, Christian Reformed and Congregational), but they share an evangelical approach to ministry and a desire to advance the cause of Christ in Halifax.

The group has grown in other ways, too. "A few years back," says David Kromminga, pastor of All Nations CRC, "we stopped being competitive about our ministries and walls came down. We stopped being so guarded about our struggles."

No-name sharing

Glenn Davis echoes this sentiment. "The goal of the group," he says, "is to share, support and pray," and the atmosphere of confidentiality and distance from the pastors' respective congregations allows them that opportunity to share.

Glenn Davis is quick to point out that names of parishioners are never part of the discussion. "The point is," he explains, "that you can share in general terms a problem that you are experiencing in your church, and no one is trying to guess which of your parishioners are involved."

Moreover, the group does not meet to solve problems through discussion, but simply to pray for one another. However, some solutions to problems have come as a by-product of this gathering, such as the "Temporarily Fred" non-denominational youth ministry initiative recently begun in Halifax (see related story), and a pooling of resources to support the existing "Religion in Schools" program.

Firmer structure

Changes over the years have helped the group become more stable. It initially moved from church to church, but now meets predictably every second week at First Congregational Church. The meeting time was changed from 8:30 a.m. to 9:30. And by agreement, members have limited their sharing and fellowship time to one-half hour so that they do not neglect the purpose of the group: prayer. Confidentiality is essential, as is a commitment to supporting rather than judging.

David Kromminga is currently drawing up a covenant that will articulate the group's purpose and the important elements of their fellowship. In the meantime, these pastors continue to meet together to provide a unique kind of care for one another, and to experience their shared ministry in Christ's church.

News

Suspicion and healing discussed at conference

... continued from page 1
polished uttering of the tongue," said Olthuis.

The reality of pain

Walter Brueggemann took Olthuis' theme of exegetical



James Olthuis

freedom a few steps further. He sees the biblical canon both as "a baseline of normalcy and an ideological act." A hermeneutic of suspicion would pay attention to the partisan imposition of national and ethnic self-interest in the Bible, he said.

Brueggemann talked about two modes of suspicion: bodily suspicion and idealistic suspicion. Bodily suspicion arises out of pain. "People have been hurt by the canon," he said. Passages that limit and monopolize social power with respect to gender, class and tribe must be considered suspect. "Texts that cause such pain cannot be revelation."

But he had little good to say about idealistic suspicion — suspicion that arises out of "unbelief seeking understanding." Most of these idealistic critics are children of fundamentalists — people who were subjected to parental authoritarianism, Brueggemann claimed.

Insist on blessing

But the Bible has not yet been defeated by suspicion, said Brueggemann. We must return to the wounding text to see what healing there is for us. Like Jacob, we must wrestle with the text and insist on a blessing.

The second mode after a reading of suspicion is the move into retrieval. Face the wounding which the text inflicts and then continue to be haunted by the wounding text, he said. But in this process, Brueggemann, unlike Olthuis, ends up with a contradiction, not a Yes, Yes.

Showing how he applies his attitude of suspicion and re-

trieval, Brueggemann critiqued 1 Samuel 15, a passage in which Samuel rebukes Saul for not exterminating the Amalekites. Brueggemann has a hard time accepting Samuel's recipe for "ethnic cleansing" as Yahweh's will.

Either Yahweh is stuck with an ideological Samuel or they are both not very winsome, he said. "Maybe Yahweh was having a bad day."

Brueggemann sought retrieval in a parallelism between Saul and David. Saul twice said he was sorry but was not forgiven. David, who triumphed over the Amalekites, was forgiven for killing Uriah and stealing Bathsheba. In that sense comfort lies on the horizon and establishes Yahweh as the God of all comfort, said Brueggemann.

The final word

Two respondents, Christiana de Groot-Van Houten and Richard Middleton, praised Brueggemann for his brutal honesty with the reality of pain. But the final word, said de Groot-Van Houten, is not the crucifixion but the resurrection. And Middleton gave some suggestions for making daring interpretations.

Another conferee suggested that we should not drop the reality of God's wrath over against sin, which enables us to read the Samuel story without calling it ethnic cleansing.

In a separate workshop Dr. Al Wolters of Redeemer College in

Ancaster, Ont., said that there are appropriate forms of suspicion, especially when it concerns translators, manuscripts and characters in the story. We can also be suspicious of the readers. But Wolters

a relationship between God and the world, God and people. There is a certain give-and-take in that relationship said Keesmaat. Both parties can get angry and call each other to account.

Connecting with the theme of

God at the heart of the story, and it shows that real power consists of dying for another person."

The healing that we experience today can only be wounded healing, said Keesmaat. The Christian community is a community that groans with creation (Romans 8) but is upheld by God's covenant love.

Bep Koole, an elder at Jubilee Fellowship Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines, who describes herself as a non-academic, says she knew that some of what would be said at the conference would be above her head, but not all of it was.

She could easily follow the speech by Phyllis Tribble of Union Theological Seminary on "Suspicious Narratives and a Trustworthy God?" And she especially liked Keesmaat's address. Koole was touched by the image of a tree, and how the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

"I felt so much trust," she says. "We might have suspicion about some things, but underneath there is trust."



Guest speakers Phyllis Tribble (left) and Walter Brueggemann.

said that trust is appropriate when it concerns the fundamental ideology in Scripture, the narrator and the voice of God.

suffering that ran through the conference, she said that the ultimate violence was committed on God. "The crucifixion puts

Wounded healing

In the closing keynote address, ICS senior member Sylvia Keesmaat talked about a hermeneutic for healing. Taking the perspective of a tree, she told the biblical story from creation to the end times. She chose the tree because it has a marginalized voice and much violence has been enacted upon it.

The biblical story is a story of

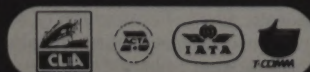
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Editorial

Trust and assay, for there's no other way

To say that I was challenged at the recent ICS hermeneutics conference would be an understatement. Not being a theologian, I was bombarded with information that made me wonder if I had inhabited another world for the past 20 years. Either they were from Mars or I was.

But since my assumption has always been that God created the universe, being from another planet is no reason for estrangement. Maybe I can learn from these alien creatures who talk about a hermeneutic of suspicion. Having worked with a hermeneutic of trust for all these years, maybe I need to be aroused from my exegetical slumber and stand in the light of the postmodern question mark.

Valid suspicions

Senior member James Olthuis pointed out that the moment God created human beings there was hermeneutics. To be human is to interpret. Nothing that we know is the same as what has been revealed to us. There is no innocent, neutral reading of Scripture. I liked Olthuis' suspicion of those who pretend they read the Bible without "glasses."

I also approved of his wanting to deconstruct the modernist interpretations that depend on the scientific method and lead to a "mastery" of God's

Word. Although Olthuis' critique was focused more on historical criticism, as offered by the Jesus Seminar, for example, I sensed a bit of that mastery mode when I took a course in Louis Berkhof's Reformed doctrine at Calvin College years ago. I got an A in that course, but it never really touched me. We need to approach the living Word of God with fear and trembling and pray fervently for the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Trust and risk

Olthuis did not chuck the classic readings of Scripture. In fact he pictured them as "indispensable guard rails for future readings." But he wanted to shake them loose by approaching the Scriptures with love, with the stranger, widow and orphan, with suffering, dirt and slums. He called this approach "a hermeneutic of connectedness." Such an approach would result in a fresh reading of Scripture which repeats the classic readings (the first Yes) as it alters them (the second Yes). Olthuis calls this Yes-Yes response a postmodern Amen.

In actuality, Olthuis does not consider this a hermeneutic proceeding out of suspicion, but out of trust and vigilance, trust and risk, trust and adventure. The goal of exegesis is not a uniform conclusion or one true interpretation, but "transformed lives, a surge of mercy." We have to become letters inscribed by the Holy Spirit, says Olthuis.

Pain as hermeneutic principle

I found the emphasis on pain and suffering a very good emphasis. I remember being involved in a discussion years ago about a young preacher whose sermons seemed rather facile and superficial. We concluded that the man had not suffered enough to be able to preach a profound message. Suffering and pain deepen us. A chastening by the Spirit of God makes us more humble and more receptive to the fullness of the love and truth of the gospel.

Being involved in the lives of people who have been abused, who struggle to make ends meet, who are wracked with pain and disappointment affects one's approach to the Scriptures. Passages like "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink..." draw us to the heart of the ministry of reconciliation which Christ embodied while on earth.

But at the same time I wondered whether we should now call for a hermeneutic of connectedness. Is this chastening by the Spirit a hermeneutic tool? Or is the word "tool" suspect because it suggests mastery? Can adventure or pain become a hermeneutic principle? In other words, does my interpretation of a Bible passage change radically because I have suffered?

Can God be suspect?

I will not comment too much on what Walter Brueggemann said at the conference. He does not represent the ICS and this was an academic conference where one should be free to explore several "unorthodox" ideas. Although one conferee thought ICS should assume some responsibility for what he said, seeing that he was "showcased and surrounded with cotton batting."

Brueggemann's suspicion of the Bible leads him

to suspect Samuel when he speaks or thinks he speaks on behalf of God in 1 Samuel 15; and, in Brueggemann's bolder moments, it leads him to suspect God himself. To call God's request to Saul via Samuel to wipe the Amalekites off the face of the earth an instance of "ethnic cleansing" with all the derogatory association we attach to that term, is to deny God's sovereignty and God's right to be angry over sin. And it overlooks the differences in historical context and divine dispensations of God's will.

Suspensions of all authority

But I want to address an underlying concern I have with postmodern attempts to speak to a culture that is rapidly losing any sort of connectedness with the past and with Old Testament revelation. Postmodern hermeneutics want to answer the postmodern suspicions of authority and power.

This is, indeed, a deep-rooted suspicion. With all the stories now rampant about fathers abusing their children and wives, priests and sports coaches taking advantage of boys, and other leaders using their power for their own advantage, it is difficult to light a torch for good leadership and God-given authority. But unless we continue to light that torch, and uphold the second commandment "Honor your father and your mother," we are doomed as a civilization.

How hard should we try to become acceptable to the postmodern spirit? Should we not stand over against the spirit of our time? In previous decades we used to hear calls of "Be ye holy," that is, "separate" emanating from leaders in our community. Are we now being urged to connect?

The "antithesis," which acknowledges the absolute opposition of the Kingdom of God and its laws to the kingdoms of this world, also becomes evident in the time spirits we encounter. To what extent is the postmodern spirit as it exegetes the Bible "unbelief seeking understanding," to quote Brueggemann's critique of those whose suspicions of the Bible come out of idealistic concerns rather than out of pain?

How can we escape?

Even though I am not a theologian, I am comfortable with a fair amount of doubt about various assumptions we have cultivated about the Bible and certain texts. But I also have a lot of suspicion when it comes to revolutionary new understandings of Scripture passages. I like the critique of Western rationalism and of naive "I simply read the Bible" approaches. In fact, I need to be delivered from these from time to time.

But what is the alternative? I wonder. Another time-spirit construction? Is there anything in God's Word that can lift us above these cultural forces? Do we really need to abandon the various tools of interpretation that have stood the test of time? Is a hermeneutic of suspicion not based on a false trust in the individual's ability to rise out of the ruins of distrust?

My response to a hermeneutic of suspicion is definitely not a Yes, Yes. It would lead me too far afield from a childlike appropriation of the Scriptures.

BW

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Letters

Disappointed with students' approach to the Spirit

I read with keen interest the full-page reproduction of what Curt Gesch's Grade 10 students think of the Holy Spirit. I assume that this subject came up in the context of Pentecost. Frankly, I was a bit disappointed about the students' comments.

I may assume that Mr. Gesch's students' comments reflect his teaching about who or what the Holy Spirit is. What I missed is the Pentecost's direct connection with the ascension of Jesus Christ. Too often we deal with the Holy Spirit in a kind of etherial way as being something vague, hard to describe; the Holy Spirit touches our feelings in a sort

of an aura of mystery or mystical power.

The power of the Holy Spirit is far more real than that. It has to do directly with the message Jesus gave to his disciples just before his ascension to heaven, when he said, "I am given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, [because I am the absolute King in and over the universe] go out and make all nations citizens of my kingdom, baptizing them...."

Making all nations citizens of his Kingdom is the main mandate of the Great Commission. Of course, such a mandate went far beyond the capability of simple fishermen. But Jesus comforts

them by saying (and I'm paraphrasing a bit): "Don't worry about that, because I will be with you till the end of the age. And now go back to Jerusalem. In 10 days you will be empowered for your mandate by the outpouring of the power of my Spirit.

"From then on it will be clear sailing, not without trouble — you will be persecuted and martyred," but whatever you have to go through, the Holy Spirit will enable you to endure joyfully. Just be obedient to my commandments. In faith, totally surrender to me. The more you surrender to me, the more you will experience the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit."

Because of obedience in faith, Peter was able to stand up and speak boldly. Quite a difference from his behavior at the courthouse where Jesus was condemned. Then he was scared stiff; now he

is bold, never mind the consequences.

Have you ever noticed that the first martyrs were killed for political reasons? The first Christians, after they submitted to the authority of Christ as the King of kings and Lord of lords, could not in good conscience pay allegiance to the Roman Emperor as being divine. And it cost them their lives. It was their faith, empowered by the Holy Spirit, which enabled them to be obedient to the end. That's what the Holy Spirit is all about.

I want to ask Curt Gesch to please read the booklet which I am going to mail to him: "What are the Challenges of the Christian Community for the Next Century?"

The answer to that question? "To live Life, in all its aspects, on the terms of the Kingdom of Christ."

Syrt Wolters
Victoria, B.C.

Better never than late

Re: Your front-page story "Christians and Jews urge government to prosecute war criminals" (May 16).

Whom are the Christians and Jews prosecuting at this late date? The criminal? Forget it. They prosecute his family, his in-laws and his grandchildren. Please, let's be up-front about that.

Then there is the cost, at approximately \$2 million per case. The May 22 issue of *Canadian Jewish News* reads: "Bogutin case heads overseas." It will sit there from May 26 to June 13, after which it will reconvene in Toronto after Labor Day. (Bogutin is 88 years old and has emphysema. He did not attend court at the last sitting.)

I read in the May 15 issue of *Canadian Jewish News*: "Sher wants prosecution of Nazi small fry." According to Sher, it took hundreds of thousands of small fry to make the Holocaust happen. Jacob Luitjens was "small fry," and he spends his Canadian pension money in the Netherlands.

If we must be after justice (and not revenge) what about the two or three generations of Palestinians who live as refugees as a result of Zionism (Canadian Christian Zionism included)? These people are my age, having lived through the war years.

G.M. Stehouwer
Richmond Hill, Ont.

Leave parts of your lawn unmown

With interest I read yet another article in what begins to look like a series dealing with lawns. The latest one by John R. Wood (CC, May 23) again highlights the problem of manicured, plastic lawns so prevalent today.

Originally an import from England, such lawns indeed are not allowing within their borders a sizable section of God's creation: "weeds" simply do not belong in a "civilized" yard. One need only look through any basic herbal book to realize that many "weeds" can be helpful to humans, and we would all benefit much by their inclusion in our daily lives.

To be fair, there can be a problem with all this. Many good people, who think as you and I, would not mind having a "rough" or "natural" lawn were it not for the fact that such a lawn would look unkempt, and would be frowned upon by neighbors who would simply view it as an uncared piece of property. They even might have people from city hall visit you to make sure your grass gets cut. However, a balanced solution is possible.

Here in B.C., where I live, a program called *Naturescape British Columbia* suggests: "Consider leaving parts of your lawn unmown. The backyard is probably the best place to start. Continue to mow around the edges so that the project is seen as clearly intentional."

This is what I have done. My front lawn is approximately 80 square feet. I have left the middle part in its natural shape, and regularly introduce indigenous plants to enhance the whole. With the many different grasses and "weeds" that grow there now, the middle part looks most attractive. The edges that I do mow by handmower. This is good for not only the environment and the lawn, but for me as well!

For further information about this program you may contact: Naturescape British Columbia, 300-1005 Broad Street, Victoria, BC V8W 2A1

Frank DeVries
Pender Island, B.C.

He went willingly!

The following correction needs to be made about the story (CC, May 9) "Cambridge Youth Cement Relationships."

The story says concerning me, "but he eventually relented and came along." Nothing could be further from the truth! When asked by our young people to go with them, I accepted immediately, without hesitation.

Ralph Koops
Cambridge, Ont.

A bunch of feathers

I'm writing with a two-fold purpose. First, I want to say thanks for your continued attention to Christian education, particularly your on-going commitment to coverage of Christian higher education. The articles that appear in *Christian Courier* are appreciated. Your May 6 article on a pair of honors for Dordt College was just the latest example of your solid coverage in this area.

That article, however, brings me to my second purpose for writing — and admission that, in this case, I was scooped by my colleagues at Dordt. Even as your story appeared, I had on my desk a letter from the John Templeton Foundation letting me know that Calvin, too, has been

named to The 1997-98 Honor Roll for Character-Building Colleges. In fact, this was the seventh time (out of seven) that Calvin has been so honored.

Having both Calvin and Dordt on the list is a feather in the cap for our respective institutions and for Christian higher education in general. My hunch is that had the Templeton Foundation included Canadian as well as American academic institutions, The King's and Redeemer, too, would have received kudos.

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Education

Calvin College establishes institute, chair on Christianity and politics

Phil de Haan

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Calvin College has announced the establishment of two initiatives to honor former U.S. Congressman Paul B. Henry, who served the college as a professor of political science prior to his career in politics.

The Paul B. Henry Institute for the Study of Christianity and Politics, and the Paul B. Henry Chair in Christianity and Politics have been established at Calvin with more than \$1 million in gifts from friends and supporters of Henry, who served first in the Michigan legislature and then in the U.S. Congress before his untimely death on July 31, 1993, at the age of 51 from brain cancer.

Discussion forum

Calvin officials hope the Henry Institute will become a national forum for discussions on the relationships between religion and public life.

Says college provost Joel Carpenter, "I fully believe that this institute can become a signature program for Calvin College and a valuable asset to [western] Michigan, where the role of religion in public affairs is quite naturally a topic of conversation. Paul Henry showed us how to integrate faith and politics with credibility, conviction and courage. It is my hope that the Henry Institute will bring similar qualities to the important discussions and debates that we face as a nation and society. We expect that scholars, journalists, political office-holders and interested lay people from across the country will rely upon the Henry Institute for seasoned and mature insights and fresh ways of understanding religion's public role in the United States and elsewhere."

Calvin professor and chair of the political science department

Corwin Smidt has been named to a three-year term as the first holder of the Henry Chair, a role that also will see him serve as the executive director of the Henry Institute.

'Engaged, active, aware'

The new Institute models some of the things that Henry himself did in the 1970s, during his 1970-1978 tenure as a Calvin College professor of political science. Henry and philosophy professor Richard Mouw (now president of Fuller Theological Seminary) spearheaded the annual Calvin Conference on Christianity and Politics — a major occasion for Christian scholars and activists nationwide to meet and share ideas.

Smidt says, "We will bring a variety of conferences and seminars to Calvin via the institute. One of the primary goals will be to encourage young people to consider political study and public service and how the Christian faith relates to both. We want to create a new generation of scholars and public servants who are engaged, active and aware."

Among the institute's planned pursuits are such things as regular national conferences, an annual Paul B. Henry Lecture (the first of which was delivered to a full house in Gezon Auditorium on Calvin's campus last month by former U.S. Senator Mark Hatfield), courses and seminars on religion and public life, research projects, conferences and regular publications.

Evaluating current issues

Calvin College also hopes to return to its campus the conference that Henry and Mouw created in the 1970s, "But with more topical focus and concrete relevance than in those early days," says Joel Carpenter. "Now Christians are politically active, but to what end?"

Carpenter sees the Henry Institute as able and willing to add a positive Christian perspective to such issues as welfare reform, church and state interactions, the role of religion in international human rights debates, and more.

In addition to the new Henry Chair and Institute, Calvin also will be home to the Paul B. Henry Archives, envisioned as a premier repository for the papers of nationally respected public servants in the U.S.

Calvin elects first woman board chair



Sheri Haan

Phil de Haan

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. — Sheri Haan, 56, made history on May 16 when she was elected as the first woman to chair the Calvin College board of trustees. (Haan's position and other appointments are slated to be ratified at the October 1997 board meeting).

Now retired, Haan spent 27 years working for Christian Schools International (CSI), including breaking ground there as CSI's first female executive director.

Haan has lived in Grand Rapids most of her life and now lives in Suttons Bay, Mich., with her husband, Glen. Haan considers her election to lead Calvin's board "an honor." But she adds, "The proof of who you are, and what you are, is always what you, finally, do. What you accomplish is really the test. In that sense, gender isn't an issue."

Pedagogeries



Alyce Oosterhuis

The 'recency' effect

Psychological research on memory often involves a series of numbers, pictures, objects, events. When subjects are asked to recall the series, they usually recall the first and the last of the series most accurately.

These "primacy" and "recency" effects are evident beyond the laboratory as well. In April, we had our graduating education students participate in 20-minute mock interview settings with public, separate and Christian school principals. Each interview was conducted in front of their 20 classmates and three profs, and lively discussions were held after each 20-minute session.

What was very striking in students' responses to the question: "What has prepared you to be an effective teacher?" was their mention of the 12-week practicum experience they had just completed. Since these 20 students have completed 50 courses each in their five years of general and professional education courses, one could have expected more than the actual mention of one specific college course by one student.

If the ratio of 1:1000 were to be significant, then many of us who think we are influencing students to be good teachers in the college courses we teach should pack our bags and quit.

Still immersed in the near-past

However, I believe that what we heard in the interviews confirmed the recency effects. Having just completed their teaching practicum and spent several days reflecting on these experiences as they compiled their practicum and job portfolios, our interviewees were still immersed in the world of their practica. It is to be hoped, as greater distance in time occurs between their graduation and employment, memories and learnings from other courses will surface: a colleague's remarks will trigger phrases from a philosophy course; a child's behavior will send the teacher scurrying through psychology notes; a unit writing exercise will reconstruct the perspective they debated in their history courses.

That we are frequently influenced by recency effects should, however, cause us to evaluate the impacts of our words and actions.

A teacher may have been a dynamic and creative force for the first 20 years, but if the last few years of his or her career are characterized as dull and boring, chances are that he or she will be remembered as such.

A researcher may have been brilliant for years, but if (as has happened) his last published research was found to contain falsified data, then he or she is remembered as a forger.

A wonderful family holiday ends in a tragedy and all subsequent re-telling of the holiday is colored by the event.

For those of us who have frequent social interactions, the recency effect should cause us to guard our mouths and monitor our actions daily. With what memory did we end the class for that particular student? How did we conclude the week? the term? the year? How do we want to be remembered in our most recent actions?

Alice Horzelenberg Oosterhuis wishes to be remembered for enjoyable and relevant learning in the classroom. She teaches educational psychology at The King's University College, Edmonton.

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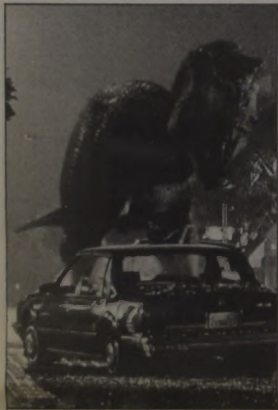
Film review

Jurassic Park sequel has lusty dinos, leaky plot

Marian Van Til

The Lost World

Rated PG. Stars Jeff Goldblum, Julianne Moore, Arliss Howard, Pete Postlethwaite. Written by David Koepp, from the novel by Michael Crichton. Directed by Steven Spielberg.



A T. rex terrorizes San Diego in *The Lost World*.

Steven Spielberg's dinosaur flick *Jurassic Park* has made more profit for director/creator Steven Spielberg and friends than any movie ever made. And while sequels are considered to be quite successful if they haul in 80 per cent of what the original brought in, *The Lost World* seems well on its way to being nearly as popular as its predecessor.

That, even though many critics have greeted this sequel with ho-hum interest. This critic, however, thinks *The Lost World* deserves at least slightly better than it's getting from some of the more jaded critics. The film at least has a conscience.

Some background on the first movie is in order: a scientist turned-entrepreneur, Dr. Hammond (Richard Attenborough), set up an outpost of his Ingen Corporation on a remote Pacific Island where he was able to create dinosaurs from DNA extracted from ancient dinosaur-blood-sucking mosquitoes trapped in amber. He created a kind of theme park for them (*Jurassic Park*) which he intended to open to the public and make millions of dollars on.

But the dinosaurs had other ideas. They unobliquely refused

to be interfered with, went on a rampage, smashed the place to bits, and tore to pieces several few human technicians — and a lawyer! (I've forgotten how Hammond was able to make more than one species of dinosaur, but the story writers spun some theoretical possibility or other that sounded vaguely plausible to the average non-scientist.) Needless to say, Hammond returned home a wiser (and only slightly poorer) man.

They're ba-aack!

Begin Part 2.

It seems there was a second island.... Onto which Hammond had removed the remaining dinosaurs and left them to their own devices (how he got them there is something to ponder). Since then they have been thriving on that self-contained world apart from human scrutiny and greed. But that's about to end.

Now a mostly bed-ridden old man, Hammond wants a small team of scientists to unobtrusively study the creatures and then leave. But Hammond's scheming, greedy nephew, Peter Ludlow (Arliss Howard) has other plans, among which are reviving his uncle's theme park idea (with the, um, *bugs* worked out, of course) and opening the island to hunting — giving new meaning to "big game" safaris.

Hammond asks paleontologist Sarah Harding (Julianne Moore) from the previous movie) to be on the team he sends to the island. She jumps at the chance. Hammond asks Harding's boyfriend, Ian Malcolm (Jeff Goldblum) to go too, but he refuses — until he finds out Sarah is already there. He's convinced she'll be dinosaur fodder in no time and only wants to get her back. Rounding out the group of good guys is another scientist and an environmentalist photographer. Harding's 12-year-old daughter sneaks along for the ride, presumably to spend quality time with the dad she never sees. And to provide elementary-aged viewers with the only person in the cast near their age.

That brings up an interesting point. This is *not* a movie for young children. There's a good deal of loud violence of the dinosaurs-running-around-smashing-trailers-and-cars variety. To say nothing of the dinosaurs-

tearing-people-in-half-and-eating-them variety (though mercifully, most of the graphic details of the latter occur off-screen).

The movie was filmed almost entirely at night, and much of it in the rain, increasing the shadowy atmosphere of the plot and a sense of foreboding. But not *that* foreboding: you know that in these kinds of movies the good guys always win and the bad guys get their just deserts (well, in this case, the good dinosaurs — who are only being dinosaurs — get the bad guys for dessert).

The Lost World means first of all to entertain. But it also has a message; in fact, it's a kind of parable about what happens when we seriously muck about with nature and exploit it instead of respecting and protecting it. The dinosaurs here are the ultimate endangered species, though they were the one group of species not destroyed by human beings, but rather

brought back from extinction by human meddling.

They strike fear in human hearts, at least in those who don't take the time to understand them. Certainly Spielberg means viewers to draw parallels to animals we know in our world — e.g., wolves, mountain gorillas, whales — which have been misunderstood and feared nearly to extinction.

Seen in their natural habitat the dinosaurs aren't vicious creatures, Sarah Harding discovers, but fascinating and magnificent. The trouble starts only when they are forced to defend their young, or to defend themselves from capture and persecution.

Find those bloopers

There are some inexplicable plot anomalies which should have been caught by someone (e.g., how does the crew of a ship get obliterated by a captured dinosaur that is locked in

the ship's hold? Did it nicely trot back to its cage and close the doors after it had dispatched the crew?). Despite that and several other gaffs, the story isn't so utterly predictable that you lose all interest. And if you don't like the plot, the dinosaurs and special effects are believable enough (via amazing use of both computer images and puppetry) that most people, and especially (older) kids, will be willing to suspend disbelief for a couple of hours.

The acting, by and large, is good, and classically trained British actor Pete Postlethwaite as the leader of the hunting party commands the screen whenever he appears.

Still, couldn't someone of Steven Spielberg's imagination and immense financial resources have come up with a sequel whose plot was even half as finely crafted as the special effects were?

Summer of Cabot turns focus on Canada's newest province

ST. JOHN'S, Nfld. (Canadian Scene) — Newfoundland didn't officially join Canada until 1949, more than 70 years after Canada's ninth province, British Columbia, became part of the Canadian confederation. And to many Canadians, the island remains largely unknown. It is said that more tourists visit Toronto during a single summer weekend than visit Newfoundland in an entire year. But all that's going to change this year, Newfoundland tourism officials say.

The island is making the most of the opportunities that lie in the 500th celebration of European "discovery" of North America. It is true that Columbus reached the Caribbean five years earlier and that a small Viking settlement existed in Newfoundland more than a thousand years ago and then disappeared. But in recent years, more and more Canadians have been inclined to look to Giovanni Caboto — or John Cabot — as the man who paved the way for permanent European settlement in what is now Canada. They argue that, if the United States can celebrate its Colum-

bus Day, so should Canada celebrate June 24 as the date of Cabot's landing.

The Italian seafarer, who enlisted in the service of the English King Henry VII, sailed from Bristol in 1497 and found, not the gold and spices of the Orient that he'd hoped to reach through the Northwest Passage, but millions of fish off the coast of what must have been Newfoundland. Although England showed no initial interest in colonizing the island, its sailors continued to make fishing expeditions to the waters off Newfoundland and were soon joined by fishermen from France, Portugal and Spain. Eventually, in 1583, the Englishman Sir Humphrey Gilbert did sail to Newfoundland to open up a settlement — St. John's. It was the first in North America.

Centre of hot dispute

With the beginning of conflict between England and France, Newfoundland became a hotly disputed territory. St. John's became a battleground many times over, but it was in that city that in 1762 the last real battle was fought between the warring

nations.

Over the years, Newfoundlanders developed as a hardy race of men and women who knew how to survive with dignity and a sense of humor. They're a hospitable, friendly people who, in spite of hardships, know how to laugh.

Hundreds of events

On June 24, as a replica of Cabot's ship, *The Matthew* sails into the port of Bonavista, where the original is said to have landed 500 years ago, thousands will be there to greet her, including Queen Elizabeth II and her husband, Prince Philip. And all summer, literally hundreds of events throughout the island will lure tourists, including Festival 500 which for 11 days will attract adult and youth choirs from all over the world such as the internationally famous King's Singers from England, the Exaudi Chamber Choir from Cuba and the Iseler Singers from Toronto. For complete information on the festivals and events there's a toll-free number: 1-800-563-NFLD (1-800-563-6563).

Church

Protestants struggle during Albania's anarchy

TIRANA, Albania (REC) — Protestant Christians in Albania are struggling to survive through the country's anarchy. The entire army except one unit in the capital of Tirana has been disbanded. Rebels and local gangs have looted weapons and roam the streets unopposed.

Most of the 500 foreign missionaries have left the country and the property they left behind has been stolen or destroyed. Only about 45 to 50 missionaries stayed. Across the country, banks have been robbed and shops looted. In most cities local police are on the streets only eight hours a day, and it is

not safe after 3 p.m.

In some cities churches have organized peace concerts and open air worship. On March 20, the Evangelical Alliance was able to broadcast a call for repentance on national television. "Brothers, sisters, we have fought injustice with injustice. This is like trying to put out a fire with gas," the address declared. "...The reality is that... this situation started here, in my heart and yours. Pyramid schemes, anarchy and corruption are only consequences. We must deal with the cause."

Albania's church is small — before 1991 Albania was offi-

cially an atheist country. Today there are between 80 and 100 churches with about 8,000 believers.

The cause of the anarchy was mainly a failed government investment scheme. Most of the country's citizens lost some money and there are no pensions left. So the challenge to the churches to deal with these problems is great, according to Barth Companjen of Ancient World Outreach International. He added that the crisis has forced the church through a crash-course in self-reliance. "It is swim or drown," he says.

REC will study religious pluralism from bottom up

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — A Reformed Ecumenical Council (REC) committee is adopting an inductive method to help its member churches with the phenomena of religious pluralism in their communities. Rather than doing a mainly theoretical study, REC's committee on religious pluralism has

invited its members to submit concrete examples of how religious pluralism affects their lives.

Among the areas the committee will consider are schools, chaplaincies, civil ceremonies and government involvement. In each of these public areas, Christians meet people of other

faiths. The committee is asking what sort of problems arise there, and how our members have tried to solve them.

In personal and pastoral situations, the committee also will look for different experiences. The committee suggested accounts rites of passage — birth and baptism ceremonies, weddings, funerals — ancestor rituals, healing practices, and horoscopes as places where other religions may subtly work in our lives.

REC combats racism

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — The Reformed Ecumenical Council's committee for strategies to combat racism has sent a request to all member churches concerning their anti-racism policies and programs. The committee has a broad mandate, including theoretical studies of racism, developing practical guides and programs to fight racism, and to help churches assess racism in their

own communities.

The letter requests churches to supply study materials and policy information. It asks whether theology curricula address the question, and looks for practical and innovative programs that churches might have used. The committee is also looking for educational materials that can be used in local congregations.

Poland to tighten abortion law

WARSAW (Reuters) — Angering ardent feminists but giving hope to the Catholic Church and many Polish Christians, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal last week ordered a tightening of the country's abortion law which at present virtually allows abortion on demand.

The tribunal argued that the liberalized abortion law passed by the Polish parliament last year conflicts with constitutional guarantees to the right to life. Parliament must change the law within six months. A two-thirds majority would be needed to override the tribunal's decision; observers say that is unlikely.

On making disciples, not vultures

Alex Buchan

Consider the following and ask who is really to blame: In 1995 a large house church movement in China's revival province — Henan — divides when a Hong Kong pastor secretly gives a young leader 700,000 RMB (about \$85,000). This young leader then proceeds to equip all the second level leaders with their own special mobile phones, thus buying their loyalty away from the older, established leader of the movement.

In 1996 another Hong Kong pastor goes to a large town in China and visits the Three Self church and local seminary. He leaves the pastor of the church a gift of \$15,000 to disburse to the lecturers of the seminary and to partially renovate the ramshackle building. The pastor remodels his house instead.

Too great a temptation

In early 1997 a Christian underground printer receives an order from a church frustrated by waiting in vain for a whole year for Bibles from the Amity Press. With the help of a foreign Christian mission, they pay the printer \$70,000 to produce Bibles. He produces them all right, but they are of appalling quality. He skimmed on the paper and printing costs, saved \$40,000, and now runs a thriving taxi business.

In April 1997 distinguished Vietnamese house church pastor Dien Thien Tu is forced to explain how he has used two separate gifts totalling over \$50,000, two-thirds of it given to him in a one-time cash transaction. He cannot explain to the satisfaction of the overseers of his own house church movement, and the church divides.

Giver must also take responsibility

Who is really to blame? The receiver, or the giver? I would venture to suggest the giver bears at least as much culpability in these sad but typical situations as the receiver, if not more.

Think of it. That Hong Kong pastor gave the Henan house church leader a cash sum that was over 70 times the average yearly salary in that area. That's like going to someone earning \$30,000 a year in California, and giving them a briefcase filled with cash to the value of *two million, one hundred thousand dollars*, and then saying, "Please use this as you see fit for the benefit of the Body of Christ."

Would your lifestyle change just a teeny bit?

Western Christians have forgotten how astronomical are the sums they give to church leaders in the economic context of these emergent nations. And it's not merely the underground church leaders who feel like they have just won the lottery. It's also those in official positions, in prestige churches receiving dignitaries.

In China's Three Self church a highly placed friend told me, "We have three kinds of pastors now: terrified old men who just report everything to the government; strong men and women who are solid pastors; and a third group (really on the rise in the last five years) who are pure sharks and see their job solely in terms of fleecing foreign donors."

Turning men into beggars

This friend put it more graphically: "You come to make disciples; but your money ends up making vultures."

If only the examples I gave were the exception. Unfortunately, scenarios like this are rife throughout the churches of China, Vietnam and other Asian countries. Western money, carelessly given, is in danger of corrupting the leaders of the Body of Christ in these nations.

Brother Andrew once warned, "If we scatter money around poverty stricken leaders, we run the risk of turning men of God into beggars." My hope is that Western leaders will get smarter in their giving; but it's not happening yet. It had better happen soon.

Alex Buchan is Asia bureau chief for Compass Direct, a Christian news service which focusses on Christians in areas of persecution.

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Church

CRWRC and CRWM request prayer for Sierra Leone

FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (CRWRC) — On Sunday, May 25, 1997, rebel forces in Sierra Leone, West Africa, staged a military coup. Most of the disturbance centres in the capital city, Freetown.

It's in Freetown that Christian Reformed World Relief and World Missions have an office, supporting work with national staff under the name Christian Extension Services. Two vehicles and money were taken at gunpoint from this office.

Paul and Mary Kortenhoven of World Missions stayed in a guarded hotel awaiting evacuation on Friday, May 30. Roger

and Yvonne Kraker of World Missions are in an area of Sierra Leone where there is, as yet, no unrest. If the Kraker family needs to leave, they will likely drive to Guinea where other missionaries can assist them. (CRWRC's Jan Disselkoe is in North America on study leave.)

CRWRC and CRWM request prayers for the leaders and people of Sierra Leone for the Christian Reformed Church's development and evangelism programs there (began in 1980), for the mission workers and the 35 Sierra Leonean staff who remain in a challenging and possible dangerous situation.

31 World Vision staff evacuated from Sierra Leone

MISSISSAUGA, Ont. (WVC) — Aid worker Tim Andrews reports that 31 World Vision staff temporarily evacuated from Sierra Leone are safely on their way to Dakar, Senegal, today for debriefing last weekend. Expatriate staff and family members left Sierra Leone five days after a military coup that resulted in widespread looting and danger to the lives of relief workers and others.

"The evacuation is temporary, and World Vision is planning to send in a six-member team to continue relief work with national staff as soon as security permits," says Andrews, director of operations for the aid agency in Sierra Leone.

World Vision Canada president Dave Toyce asks for prayer for the national staff and for all the people in this troubled west African country. "Pray for

safety — and for the quick return of order and peace. Hunger doesn't wait for the resolution of political difficulties."

World Vision's program in Sierra Leone focuses on providing food for those most affected by the war, developing improved food distribution systems, resettlement and reintegration of displaced people to their home communities, distribution of seed and tools coupled with agricultural assistance, and providing a broad-based supply of health and nutritional services to save lives and improve health.

World Vision is a Christian humanitarian relief and development agency. For 45 years, World Vision has partnered with people and communities around the world, learning together how to address poverty and injustice.

Church organists becoming scarce in the Netherlands

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (REC) — Musicians preparing to become church organists are becoming fewer in the Netherlands. Sometimes churches advertising for a new organist cannot get even one reply, reports *Kerkinformatie*. In 1981, there were in Groningen 50 students training to become organists. Today there are two.

Various reasons are being given. Jos van der Kooy of Haarlem points out there are

fewer home organs today. And he believes secularization is a problem. Not only are young people less interested in a church music career, but many of the great city churches with fine organs have fewer services or not at all.

Jan van Laar of Deventer, chair of the church music commission of Together on the Way, adds that the problem is a part of wider society. There are fewer musicians of any traditional

kind studying because of the unattractive finances of music careers. Van Laar's committee, however, notes there is chance for improvement because the lack of organists may lead congregations to raise salaries to attract organists.

The committee is working on what church music will look like in the new united Dutch church, the one coming out of Together on the Way.

The gender of the spirit

"... And [God] took of the spirit which was upon him, and gave it unto the seventy Elders" (Num.11:25, KJV).

"... And He took of the Spirit who was upon him and placed Him upon the seventy elders" (NASB)

"... And he took of the Spirit that was on him and put the Spirit on the seventy elders" (NIV).

In my last column I discussed the problem of the appropriate pronoun to be used in referring to the Holy Spirit in English translations of the Bible. The text from Numbers quoted above is an example of this issue in the Old Testament. Of the three translations which I have cited, the King James version opts for "it," the New American Standard Bible chooses "Him," and the NIV ducks the issue by repeating the noun "Spirit." Yet the next verse makes clear that the Hebrew word for "spirit" (*ruach*) is feminine in this context. Then why do no translations have the pronoun "her"?

Person or thing?

The issue is a rather complicated one, and it is possible to make a case for each of the three English pronouns. The first issue which needs to be resolved is whether the *ruach* mentioned in this verse is a person or a thing. Many scholars believe that the spirit of God in the Old Testament is not yet revealed as a person the way the Holy Spirit is in the New Testament. The Old Testament speaks of God's *ruach* (sometimes translated as "wind" or "breath") as an impersonal force or presence. If that opinion is correct, then the appropriate English pronoun in our verse is "it."

But Christian theologians have traditionally stressed the continuity of Old and New Testament when they speak of the Spirit of God. After all, Peter applies Joel's prophecy of the outpouring of God's *ruach* to the coming of the personal Holy Spirit at Pentecost (see Acts 2). This would seem to indicate that at least some Old Testament references to God's Spirit can be understood in a personal sense.

Contemporary translators who follow this view tend to capitalize the word "Spirit" when they take it to refer to the third Person of the Trinity. The NIV, for example, uses capitalized

Chapter & Verse



Wayne Brouwer
Andrew Kuyvenhoven
Laura Smit
★ Al Wolters

"Spirit" to render *ruach* in 76 places in the Old Testament, including Num. 11:25. In those places, therefore, the question becomes: is the Spirit a "he" or a "she"?

Exegetical chauvinism?

At first glance, it would seem to be easy to answer this question. If a Hebrew noun referring to a person is masculine, then the proper English pronoun is "he"; if feminine, "she." Since in Num. 11:25-26 *ruach* is feminine, the translators should have used "her," and their failure to do so is a clear example of exegetical chauvinism.

The matter is not so simple, however. Oddly enough, the Hebrew word *ruach* is sometimes used as a masculine noun, and sometimes as a feminine noun (the ratio is about 2:5). Consequently, translators who took the gender of *ruach* as their guide would usually have to refer to the Spirit of God as a "she," but sometimes as a "he." This would be quite confusing. Furthermore, the same emphasis on the continuity of Old and New Testament which favors seeing a personal Spirit of God throughout the Bible also suggests caution in referring to the Spirit as "she."

The New Testament, which represents the culmination of biblical revelations, never identifies the Spirit as a "she," although it does occasionally (despite the neuter gender of *pneuma*) speak of the Spirit as a "he" (see John 14:26 and 16:13-14). Only the masculine pronoun has support from both Testaments. Nevertheless, it remains a striking fact that the *ruach* of God, if a person, is usually a "she" in the Old Testament.

Al Wolters teaches Bible and Greek at Redeemer College, Ancaster, Ont. He recently served on an ecclesiastical study committee investigating the issue of "inclusive language for God."

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Feature

My dad was way ahead of his time

My dad. He has already been gone for 25 years. I can, however, still hear his voice, smell his clothes, feel the stubble of his beard and see the twinkle in his eyes.

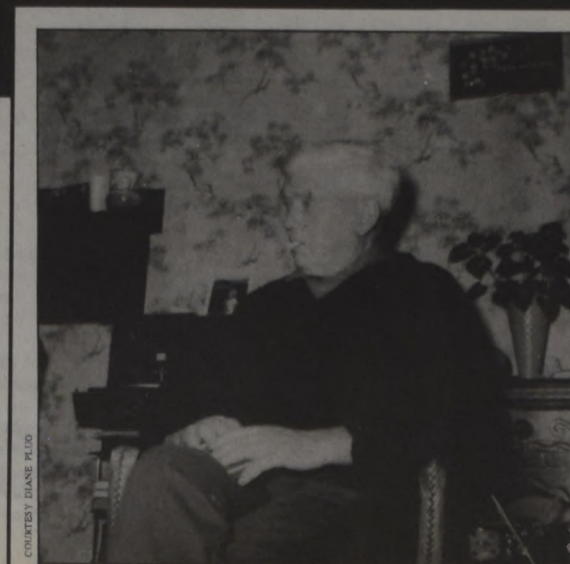
My father was short, maybe only about five-feet-four. He just about always had a cigarette in his mouth, though frequently it was not lighted. His cigarette butts could always be recognized in the ash tray because he chewed and turned the cigarettes in his mouth. He always wore suspenders to keep his trousers up and felt most at home in his work clothes. I loved his curly hair which I knew only as being almost white. I remember as a child that he would allow us to comb his hair.

Everytime I hear stories about authoritative dads, abusive dads, absent dads, I think of my dad. I think of how fortunate I have been to have had such a good, kind, nurturing, loving father.

Small farmer

My dad was born at the turn of the 20th century, Jan. 16, 1901. He never told us much about his early life. Much of what we know now we have learned from others. He had only a Grade 5 education. His own father died at an early age and he began to work for a farmer when he was just 13 years old.

For the first 25 years of his marriage he rented a small farm in the Netherlands. He and my mother had seven children, of which I was number four. My memories of my childhood years are all wrapped up with being in the fields with my parents. I remember my dad bundling up sheaves of grain, digging potatoes, raking the farm on Saturdays and making the lines all straight. (We couldn't mess up the lines.) I remember my dad looking after the horse, pigs and cows; and the tragedy when one of the cows died because it had been able to get at the tobacco which was drying hanging from the ceiling above the cows.



COURTESY DIANE PLUG

My dad loved playing games with us children. A favorite was riding his back as he pretended being a horse or a dog. Dad would sing to us and recite us poetry. Sunday afternoons were always spent walking with us; he always made himself available to us.

**I think of
how fortunate
I have been
to have had
such a good,
kind, nurturing,
loving father.**

As a family we immigrated to Canada in 1954 when Dad was already 53 years old. He worked the fields of a cash crop farmer/orchidist for nearly 10 years. He never learned to drive a car or even a tractor. He was respected and loved by the other men who would come and go during the farming season. They appreciated his optimistic nature and quiet manner of going about doing his daily work. He never judged anyone and treated

everyone with great respect.

Church was the focal point of his life. He was a consistory member for many years and always treated those years as a great privilege. Conducting the services during the absence of ordained ministers was treated as "holy" time. I remember sitting in the pews being nervous for my dad as he conducted the services.

Ahead of his time

My greatest appreciation of my dad is related to how he saw his daughters. Out of seven children, four were daughters. My dad's ambition was to own his own farm. The norm among Dutch immigrants at that time was for the children to work as soon as possible and hand over their earnings towards the purchase of a family farm. My dad was different. We were allowed to keep our own earnings, save them up, and use them for continuing our education.

I clearly remember how my dad was scorned for allowing his daughters to continue their education. "What a waste of money," a fellow church member told him. "They will only get married, and all that education will be wasted." I sometimes think my dad was a man way ahead of his time. I don't remember him ever telling any

**A tribute
to my father:
Jan Hutten**

**by
Diane Plug**

of those weaknesses became obvious in the first years in Canada when the older children carried out responsibilities that they were really not prepared for.

Dad never stopped his children from trying new things. He, however, worried needlessly when we tried to venture out. I remember that at times I would feel smothered by his concern and worries.

Memories remain

More than a year ago all of us six remaining children when to the Netherlands together to visit our remaining relatives. Some of them still had the letters Dad had written to his brothers and sisters. They have become precious to us now. The letters are filled with evidences of a strong faith in God, a love for the church and his family.

The dream of owning a farm finally came true in 1966 when my brother bought a farm which also included our dad. He experienced that ownership for just six years. Dad died in the summer of 1972 of a heart attack. His death was unexpected.

Salute to a fine man

The images I have of driving to the cemetery where his body would be laid to rest are still very vivid. An RCMP officer directed traffic at the main intersection of town. He was in full uniform and saluted the hearse as it went by. How appropriate, I thought. Here was a man who dedicated his life in great humility to his family and church.

Now it has been 25 years since my dad's death. If only I could talk to him once more and tell him how much I love and admire him. Though I can't talk to him personally I can thank God for allowing me to have such a great dad.

Fear of risks

Did my dad have any weaknesses? Of course he did, but amazingly time often magnifies strengths and minimizes weaknesses.

Fear of risk-taking and decision-making were probably his greatest weakness. He absolutely depended upon my mother in those areas. The consequences

Diane Plug, formerly known as Berendina Hutten, is a teacher at Sarnia Chr. School, Sarnia, Ont.

Poetry

The poetry of Maria Stam

If we would walk gently

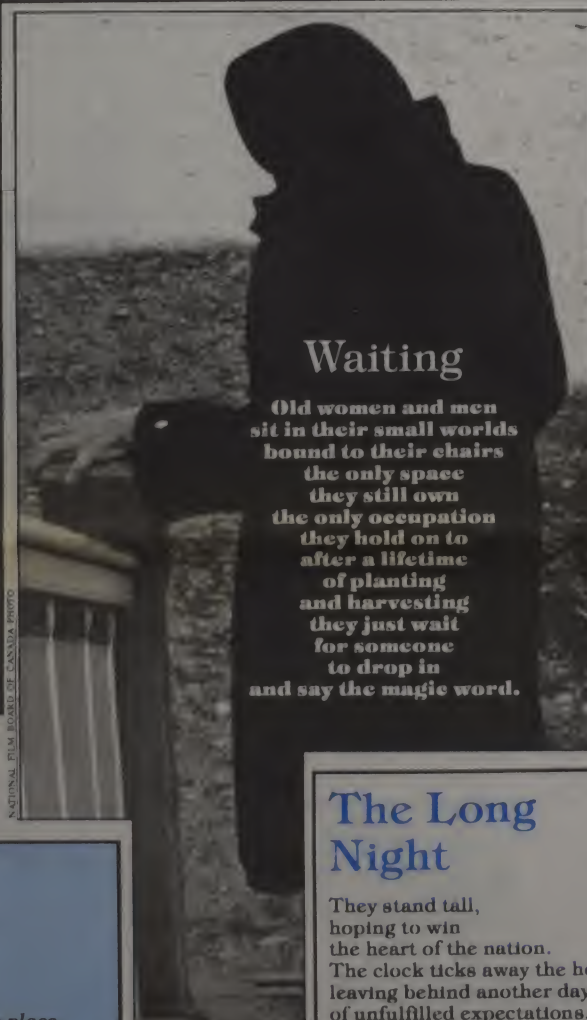
If we would walk gently
on this earth
care tenderly
for her creatures,
revere her forests,
mountains, rivers,
and receive her fruits
with grateful hearts.

If we would listen
to the melodies
of her seasons,
never changing
yet ever new
and join in here hymns
of praise.

If we would dance
with the children
under the rainbow,
join hands,
encircle the earth
in harmony
with all that is
and lives.

Perhaps then
we would save
this divine creation.

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Waiting

Old women and men
sit in their small worlds
bound to their chairs
the only space
they still own
the only occupation
they hold on to
after a lifetime
of planting
and harvesting
they just wait
for someone
to drop in
and say the magic word.

The Immigrant

Nurtured
at the fountain of life
by sounds
rooted deeply
in land, nature,
cradled with
native lullabies
discovering the world
of speech.

Uprooted
from the source,
lost in the Tower of Babel,
handicapped with words
foreign to the ears
of Shakespearean heirs.

Unable
to permeate meaning,
feelings of
"to be or not to be,"
laboring to match
letters, syllables
in a tongue twisting
puzzle.

Emotions, inspirations
come and go,
calling out
to be released
from the bondage
of a mother tongue
into a broader,
common humanity.

Thief

In the morning
a trail of animal claws
crosses my yard.
Driven by hunger
the creature left its hiding place,
plowed through the snow,
eyes fixed on scraps of food.

It commits the daring act,
wishing to stay alive
for procreation in spring,
and a new generation's sake

I excuse the intrusion
of my property and admire
the animal's instinct
to live forth,
forgetting how thin
tolerance is spread
when one of my own
dares to catch the crumbs
from the tables of the rich
to stay alive.

The Long Night

They stand tall,
hoping to win
the heart of the nation.
The clock ticks away the hour
leaving behind another day
of unfulfilled expectations.

Their voices hoarse
from long talks
while silence
lies in their blood;
only the drums can speak
of their endless struggle
and their people's anger.

Walls are erected
between the sections.
The forests echo
the cries of their ancestors
as they wait again
for the dawn of another morning
that may bring freedom
from the battle with words
and empty promises.

Homeless

Without a room
to stretch their tired limbs,
searching for a bed
in dark alleys and
under bridges,
they live between hope
and apathy.

Swept onto the road
by fate — loss of self?
Uprooted from the source
of nurture,
always tormented,
they stay on the wrong side
of the fence, struggling
to break through
iron barricades.

A passion for the underling and the vulnerable is the undercurrent of many of Maria Stam's poems. She lives in London, Ont.

Feature

Sean Aaron Osborne

JERUSALEM — Recent foreign media reports on Har Homa have prompted me to write this piece in an attempt to make the other side of the story available to those who are interested.

To get a rough picture of the chunk of land in dispute, think of a capital "P." Now, add a leg to turn it into an "R." The "P" is southern Jerusalem, the leg which completes the "R" is Har Homa.

Who owns it?

Arafat & Co. refuse to consider anything less than this: the entire area of Jerusalem which was under Jordanian rule prior to 1967 must become the capital of a Palestinian State.

Legally, the land is owned by a group of Jewish families, the majority of whom live in Israel (some live in the U.S.). These families purchased the property decades ago and have been trying to obtain permission to develop the land for quite some time. Recent Israeli Supreme Court decisions have confirmed their title to the land, but political pressures have delayed government approval of work permits until now.

Mideast traditions

There is, however, a deeper question of land ownership involved here. What we're dealing with is a clash between the Western concepts of deed and title, and the Mideast concepts of oral and tribal tradition.

The Arabic peoples in British Mandate Palestine (Israel before independence) were living and farming on Syrian-owned land, for the most part. Deed and title were held by Syrian landlords who looked upon their tenant farmers with the utmost contempt. Nonetheless, tradition precluded the Syrians from evicting their tenants and selling the land, since the tribal concept of ownership has to do more with residence and use than deed and title. There was no dispute as to Syrian "ownership," but it was never ownership in the Western sense.

Enter the Jews. Prior to independence, Zionist pilgrims purchased large tracts of unoccupied, "useless" land from Syrian owners. They bought swamps, drained them, and

moved in. They bought sand dunes and built cities, such as Tel Aviv, on them.

Har Homa was purchased in such a manner. This is an area of barren, "useless" hills just south of Jerusalem. Driving past, the Western mind naturally thinks, "I wonder when they're going to develop that area?" (The housing boom in Israel in recent years makes such thoughts inevitable).

This land, however, is not entirely useless — for a few months of every year it is covered with grass and can be grazed. And herein lies the problem.

Grazing land has been traditionally designated to different clans and families for many years in the Middle East. It is in this sense that the Palestinians "own" Har Homa. "That is grazing land which belonged to my father and to his father," a man will declare — and all his neighbors agree. Never mind that title was held by a Syrian absentee landlord until it was sold to an Israeli — that is irrelevant.

And so we have the dispute: "I bought this land, and I want to develop it," says the Israeli. "Nonsense," replies the Palestinian, "This land is mine by inheritance, and I have not sold it to you!"

Who owns Jerusalem?

Disputes such as this have been settled far more quietly in the past. The reason this one is different is because of the upcoming Final Status Negotiations with the Palestinian Authority — negotiations in which the future of Jerusalem is to be discussed. Arafat & Co. refuse to consider anything less than this: the entire area of Jerusalem which was under Jordanian rule prior to 1967 must become the capital of a Palestinian State.

Netanyahu has recently conceded the possibility of a Palestinian state, consisting of half of the West Bank. (In the Middle East, that means he's negotiating towards 75 per cent). But the big problem is Jerusalem, because the Old City, including the Temple Mount, was part of pre-'67 Jordan. And this is what the real argument is about: Who will

own the Temple Mount?

Har Homa is some distance from the Temple Mount, but it is part of pre-'67 Jordan. It's the symbolism that's important, here.

The Tel Aviv bombing

For several weeks now Arafat has been warning the Israelis that he "cannot be held responsible if there is a violent reaction" to the Har Homa housing project. This is interpreted by Israel (rightly, in my opinion), as a green light for riots and terrorism. Arafat was spouting the exact same sort of rhetoric back in September, just before the Palestinian police fired on Israeli soldiers during the worst rioting since the Intifada.

Now that the bombing has happened, Arafat publicly condemned it. He's learning: in the past it would take weeks before he would condemn a bombing. But Israel isn't buying it: Arafat has proven, they say, that he can control terror when he wishes to.

I would add a little episode which was shown on Israeli TV the day of the bombing, but which, to my knowledge, has not been broadcast elsewhere. In the town of Ramallah, just north of Jerusalem, a large Muslim

rally was being held on the day of the bombing. Picture the scene: an outdoor stage has been set up, with hundreds of spectators seated in folding chairs, and hundreds more standing. On



Yasser Arafat: Israel says he can control terror when he wishes to.

the platform, the speaker pauses for a moment as he is handed a note. He turns back to the microphone, smiling. "I am pleased to announce," he tells the crowd in Arabic, "that there has been a successful suicide bombing in Tel Aviv."

The crowd goes wild with

cheering.

Netanyahu is already being blamed for the Tel Aviv bombing: "If he hadn't built in Har Homa," the argument goes, "there would have been no bombing." But if it hadn't been Har Homa, it would have been another issue. Because this has been the Palestinian bargaining strategy all along: every time they don't get things their way, they threaten violence.

The Rabin/Peres government regularly backed down in the face of threats — that's why Netanyahu was elected (by the way, that "razor-thin" margin of victory included a full 65 per cent of the Jewish vote. It was the Israeli Arabs who voted overwhelmingly for Peres).

Building on Har Homa violates no laws. It violates no signed agreements. What it does violate are Palestinian concepts of what the final shape of the borders should be.

I don't care what the reasons are. I don't care what the arguments are. There is absolutely no excuse for this bombing. Killing innocent civilians in a restaurant (or on the street or in a bus) is not "freedom fighting"; it is cold blooded butchery. Murder. No government anywhere in the world would ever be expected to negotiate in good faith with murderers, thugs and terrorists.

No government except Israel's, that is.

Sean Aaron Osborne is a Christian journalist living in Jerusalem.



Jerusalem's Temple Mount: Who will own it?

Comment

Dear Adrian,

One of the interesting things about coming home after an extended period of time away is catching up on the news in one gulp, like reading eight *Banners* in a week. (I should say at once that we had *Christian Courier* sent to us in Arizona, lest anyone think we don't have our priorities straight.)

What a remarkable and crazy denomination we are a part of! Successes and failures, heartwarming stories of faithfulness alongside blood-chilling accounts of church-splitting with little or no regard for the consequences for families or for the larger Body of Christ. I guess we should be grateful that it all gets reported, rather than denying the uglier stories by silence. But it does make me marvel at the patience of God.

Anyway, one story in *The Banner* that caught my special attention was the story about Pearl Van Vliet, the woman whose blindness was treated with fetal transplant cells. One reason for my interest is that I have known Pearl Van Vliet all my life. She was my babysitter when I was a child. Bob and I came to know her in later years as a woman of deep faith and conviction. We know her as a woman who has learned in the hardest possible way the value of life when she and her husband had to bury their only child who died of cancer several years ago.

What a remarkable and crazy denomination we are a part of! Successes and failures, heartwarming stories of faithfulness alongside blood-chilling accounts of church-splitting.

But the letters to the editor following that story! Without exception they were condemning, even though the news story made it clear that Pearl had struggled with the ethical questions and that this fetus was taken in order to save the life of the mother. The letters all said, in effect, there is absolutely no justification *ever* for using fetal cells for *anything*. Nothing could ever be of more value than a fetus.

Which led me to muse on this whole business of how we regard human life. Don't misunderstand me — I am prolife. But I worry when we absolutize human life to a degree that the extreme proliferers do at the beginning of life and that many medical people do at the end of life. Who says that human life is sacred? I don't think that's a biblical concept. Human life is precious, certainly. But sacred? Haven't we made an idol out of human life?

Then there are the terminally ill. Years ago when my mother was obviously dying, we asked the doctor to write orders not to resuscitate or use extreme measures to keep her alive. But in the middle of the night an intern came along, saw her in the very last stage of life and resuscitated her. She lived another 24 hours in agony. I still get angry at that intern when I think of it. My father-in-law dropped dead of a heart attack at age 87. Yet he was taken to a hospital and subjected to a number of (costly) procedures designed to resuscitate him. Why? What is this obsession we have about life beyond any reason?

Then there is another extreme. My daughter-in-law had her last baby at home, delivered by a midwife. It seems there are all kinds of regulations as to what must or must not be done with the placenta, since — get this — the placenta is regarded as human tissue! We can throw away fetuses, but a placenta has to be burned or buried six feet deep because it is considered to be human tissue. Isn't that bizarre?

We, both Christians and non-Christians, need a lot of help sorting out these issues of life and death. These are not simply band-wagon issues with crystal clear answers. There I am again, pleading for a little ambiguity!

Meanwhile, I will thank God if Pearl Van Vliet receives her sight.

*Cordially,
Mary*

Mary VanderVennen is a retired therapist who normally lives in Toronto. Adrian Peetoom worked for Scholastic Tab (Educational) Publications and usually lives in Waterloo, Ont.



Dear Mary,

All during the women-in-office issues in the Christian Reformed Church one could hear this argument: if "we" "lose" this issue, next thing you know we've got to accept homosexuals, and then abortion/euthanasia. Those who support having women in all church offices tended to tut-tut that suggestion of a series of issues all connected. Perhaps they shouldn't have. The issues are connected, but not because of a chain of "wrong" conclusions.

The issues are connected by virtue of the fact that in our rapidly changing world, new and serious questions are being asked about all kinds of topics. And the new topics are forcing us to re-visit old traditions of thinking and feeling that have been with us for centuries. In fact, I'm editing a manuscript that tries to make sense of those challenges.

New issues, new thoughts, new feelings. How well are we equipped for them? Judging by our tradition's recent past, not very well. We've been raised to expect the sure answers and resist ambiguities. That's why we tend to favor doctrines over the Bible; the church order over local congregational complexities; married couples with children over singles, broken families and gays; authority and power over gifts; male over female; history over future.

The first items in this list (which I could make much longer) hold out certainty and solution, while the second ones promise doubt and movement. So, what I see before us is pain and trouble. We have a choice between two hurting roads.

The first is the road of sectarianism, in which within church walls we gather all those traditions we believe we must never change. What happens then is that the church and the world no longer touch. Except that members will have trouble keeping both apart in their full lives.

For instance, outside church walls the world of technology (computer, agricultural and medical technologies for instance) will be eagerly embraced, and large incomes eagerly pursued and accepted, but on Sundays that world is not taken inside the sanctuary. There old hymns and sermons will reign.

The second is the road of change towards destinies as yet unknown. Not one of us has a handle on what the future catapulted by rapid change everywhere will be like. How will we balance change and stability? What will be rules for judging what is acceptable and what is not? What is sin and what is not? What will the church be like?

We're both well over 60. I have a feeling we can call a halt to change within our own lives, settle what we'll think about and what not, stop buying the "latest." Our children won't be able to, and certainly our grandchildren won't, but we can find the space within ourselves to hide. Shut off one topic of interest after another. Until we take our leave from daily routines for a while and discover on our return some good things we were used to have changed in our absence.

Soon Johanna and I will take our leave from Canada for seven months. What will we find when we come back? In our congregation? On our municipality? In our larger family?

How will we cope? Certainly not by digging only around the traditions and positions we've been used to since our youth. I have a feeling we shall be able to cope only if we are willing to consider that any positions we hold, in thought and feeling, can be examined without ultimate danger to ourselves. If, that is, we seek the presence of God in our lives over the security of what we have known so well. Perhaps that will be the test of spirituality for our generation; surrender ourselves to a future always in God's hands.

And if that is so, we must learn to meditate and pray far more than we have been taught to. I intend to, God helping me. And I raise my glass of sherry to Pearl van Vliet, and all those who face the new with courage.

*Cheers,
Adrian*

News/Advice

Break-away CRC picketed by local gay group

KALAMAZOO, Mich. (URNS) — Western Michigan isn't San Francisco, but gay activism isn't limited to large cities. That's what the members of Covenant United Reformed Church of Kalamazoo (formerly part of a Christian Reformed congregation) discovered when they left their Sunday morning worship service on June 1.

Members were greeted by local media covering a group of picketers chanting pro-homosexual slogans and carrying pro-gay signs. The next day church members found a story in the paper quoting gay activists who criticized the church for "shunning" a homosexual man whose female roommate also said the church was prejudiced against her bi-racial daughter.

In a statement released by the church council, Covenant URC denied the racism but affirmed its opposition to homosexual practice. Pastor Phil Vos, whose only prior media experience was a story on his recent ordination following successful cancer treatment, called the protest "an eye-opener."

No more money

One thing on which both sides agree is how the church first became involved. Jessica Miller could not pay the \$325 monthly rent at her nearby apartment because her roommate, Shane Welsh, had broken his leg and couldn't work, she said. So she contacted Covenant URC and asked for help. The church paid half of the rent and contacted her landlord to ask for an extension until she could make regular payments.

Miller, who is not a member of the congregation, contacted the church again when her financial difficulties continued. The church said it would contact her landlord. The landlord then told them Welsh was homosexual. Miller and the church deacons both confirm that Welsh and his homosexuality led to denial of financial assistance.

"They said they were denying us assistance because he was homosexual and we were living together and not married," said Miller. "[The deacon] said he understood nothing was going on... but because [Welsh] was homosexual he was an abomination to God. That's what really made us upset." Miller was also upset by what she said were "a lot of dirty looks" when she and her daughter attended a service at Covenant URC.

Miller says she and Welsh "wanted people to know that this was done. We talked with some of our friends and Shane went to an Outspoken meeting — that's a group for homosexuals to talk about these things — and we decided [picketing] was the best way...."

Phil Vos asserts, "We knew we had done nothing wrong, we had not violated Scripture; we tried to minister and hold to what God commands and we had nothing to fear."

Vos asked members not to interact with the protesters or speak with reporters until the council could meet the next evening to prepare a response.

In that unanimous response, Covenant URC cited various Scripture passages which condemn homosexuality and speak to racism.

'Way overboard'

Miller says the church "went way overboard," in the matter. And she called "ludicrous" the church's argument that they are not racists because they invited two black ministers to preach when Vos was undergoing his cancer treatment.

The church council, while expressing sorrow over any mistreatment that Miller or her bi-racial daughter might have received, addressed the other complaint this way:

"It has been publicly stated by a person who has never attended our church that he 'wasn't welcome at the church anymore' because he was gay. This person has been invited numerous times to attend our church, and our church showed Christ's mercy by offering financial help to this person's female roommate who has attended our church on one occasion.

"It has also been publicly stated that one of our deacons called this person an 'abomination.' Leviticus 18:22, not our church, calls this person's lifestyle an abomination. We, in accord with Scripture, urged him to repent of homosexual practice and receive the forgiveness of Christ. God does hold up punishment for any sinful lifestyle."

The council said it was "responding to these criticisms... because our position has been misrepresented."

Covenant URC continued to invite Miller and her roommate to services, but both said they are attending other churches.

Whatever happened to 'doing good' on Sundays?

Dear P & M:

In one of your columns a number of months ago you stated that Sunday observance came into being in the fourth century. My reading of the Bible tells me that a day of rest, i.e., the Sabbath, has been there from the beginning of time (cf. Gen. 2:2; Ex. 16:23; Ex. 20:8; Luke 4:16; 5:6; Acts 17:2). Exactly what did you mean? And while you're giving this some thought, do you have any advice for keeping Sunday holy and restful for Christians?

Dear Remember the Sabbath:

You are absolutely right about the Sabbath existing from the beginning of time. Our reference was to Constantine's legal endorsement of Sunday as the official day of rest and worship upon making Christianity the state religion in A.D. 312. Until then the idea of a Sabbath was confined to the nation of Israel. Christians living outside Israel experienced no day of rest, not even on the seventh day. After the emperor's decision, however, Roman citizens began to experience the first day of the week as we do today. We should have been clearer about that in our answer so that you would have immediately understood that we had the Lord's Day in mind.

Now to your second question. Sundays are to be characterized by three things: worship, rest and the doing of good (*Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord's Day 38). All of us might do well to evaluate our Sunday observance against these three activities.

Some of our debates focus on the area of worship, especially whether one should attend church once or twice on a Sunday. The Bible doesn't say, and the Reformers only insisted on a second weekly gathering to educate the laity.

In our humble view, 20th century Christians who enroll in a mid-week church education class and participate in a weekend fellowship group in addition to attending a Sunday morning worship service each week far exceed Luther and Calvin's expectations. That's why we're glad that the Christian Reformed Church has changed its church order to say that we should "ordinarily" worship twice on a Sunday.

Interestingly, a survey of the almost 1000 congregations in the CRC reveals that about 200 (or one out of five) churches now offer one worship service on a Sunday and invite inquirers to phone about other scheduled events.

Most of our debate, on the other hand, has focused on our definition of rest. Does it mean that we literally rest, or does it mean that we can enjoy different activities? Here is where legalism has often reared its miserable head, turning a wonderful day into a dreaded day of do's and don'ts.

Our advisory committee reminisced about some of the things that used to be forbidden: swimming, biking, watching TV, going to res-

Peter and Marja



are
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taurants. We are glad that many of the old restrictions have been lifted. But we also observed that today's generation plays as hard as it works. Our recreational activities can leave us exhausted as we squeeze in sports, travel and 48-hour excursions to the cottage. So we're not so sure that our new-found freedoms are all that liberating.

We don't want to publish our own list of do's and don'ts. But it may be helpful to remember a crucial difference between weekdays and Sundays. On weekdays we often "must." On Sundays we "may." Therein lies the difference between what is work for one and rest for the other. This explains why greenhouse owners may prefer to read on Sundays and why a white-collar worker finds it restful to work (play) in his or her garden. Thank goodness that Paul tells us to withhold judgment about each other's preferences (Romans 14:5,6).

All this discussion on worship and rest rarely touches on the third category of activity, the doing of good. We have noticed that this area suffers the most. In fact, all the recreational activity that now consumes us leaves us little time to reach out to those who are lonely, sick or shut-in.

Have you noticed that the days of inviting people to our homes after church are in decline? People tend to have their coffee at church and head home to their individual pursuits. That's a shame. There's a selfish side to Sunday's pre-occupation with family, close friends and outings to the beach which deprives us of the opportunity to meet and assimilate church visitors and new members, to mention just a few who would benefit from our reaching out.

Finally, back on a lighter note, our panel's favorite Sunday activity turned out to be hiking. Rural folks may not feel the need as much, but we urban types especially feel the need to experience something different than our artificial environments (i.e. office building, industrial plant, classroom, computer work station), and something that allows us some exercise.

So use Sunday to get out and praise God for the beauty of his creation. Drink in the pages of God's other "beautiful book" (*Belgic Confession*, Article 2). And let Sundays include a time of individual worship in nature as well as communal worship in church.

Write to: P & M, 16 Kimbermount Drive, St. Catharines, ON L2N 5V6.

Peter and Marja Slofstra are a pastor and wife team living in St. Catharines, Ont. They are assisted by an advisory panel consisting of Herman de Jong, Bill Lidkea, Alan Vandermaas, Marian Van Til and Bert Wirvoet.

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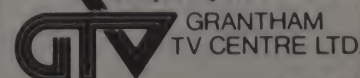
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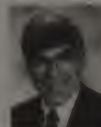
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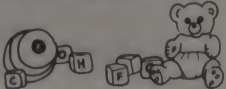

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<p>(Revised February 1, 1995)</p> <p>Births \$25.00</p> <p>Marriages & Engagements \$40.00</p> <p>Anniversaries \$45.00</p> <p>2-column anniversaries \$90.00</p> <p>Obituaries \$45.00</p> <p>Notes of thanks \$35.00</p> <p>Birthdays \$40.00</p> <p>All other one-column classified advertisements: \$15.00 per column inch. NOTE: Minimum fee is \$15.00. Letter under file number \$35.00 extra. Photos: \$25.00 additional charge.</p> <p>Note: All rates shown above are GST inclusive.</p> <p>ATTENTION!</p> <p>a) <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format.</p> <p>b) A sheet with information about an obituary sent by funeral homes is not acceptable since it leads to errors and confusion.</p> <p>c) Photographs sent by fax are not acceptable. If you wish a photo included, send us the original.</p> <p>d) <i>Christian Courier</i> will not be responsible for any errors due to handwritten or phoned-in advertisements.</p> <p>e) The rate shown above for classifieds covers any length up to five column inches. <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to charge for additional column inches at the rate of \$15.00 per column inch (GST incl.).</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS</p> <p>We offer a one-year subscription for only \$25.00 (GST incl.) to the couples whose wedding is announced in the <i>Christian Courier</i> and to the parents of the child whose birth announcement appears in our paper. To facilitate matters, we encourage those who request the wedding or birth announcement to enclose \$25.00 and the couple's correct address.</p> <p>Christian Courier 4-261 Martindale Rd. St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1 Phone: (905) 682-8311 Fax: (905) 682-8313</p>	<p>HEERSINK-PEETOOM: Friends and relatives rejoice with us! The Lord and giver of life has blessed us with our seventh grandchild a girl.</p> <p>MARGARET MARIA PEETOOM HEERSINK born May 28, 1997.</p> <p>Second child for happy parents Paul Heersink and Laura Peetoom. A sister for Samuel. The proud grandparents are Gernt and Ielke Heersink. Eleventh grandchild for Adnan and Johanna Peetoom. Home address: 10 Caroline St., Apt. 8, Lindsay, ON K9V 1T1</p>  <p>ZANDSTRA: John and Bev Zandstra (nee Hogeterp) of Ridgetown, Ont., thank God for the safe arrival of</p> <p>DEREK JOHN born Saturday, May 17, 1997, at 2:30 p.m., weighing 7 lbs., 4 3/4 oz. A new brother for Gregory (with Jesus), Brett, Katie, and Canssa. A new grandson for John and Ellen Zandstra of Jarvis, and Susan Hogeterp of Townsend, and great-grandson for Ben and Elizabeth Hofland of Shalom Manor, Gtmsby, Ont.</p> <p>Marriages</p> <p>WIERSMA/EVANS: Mr. and Mrs. William and Johanna Wiersma of Burlington, Ont., announce the marriage of their daughter</p> <p>JACQUELINE DOROTHY to MARK EVANS This will take place on Saturday, July 12, 1997, D.V., in Hamilton, Scotland. Their address is: 12 L Spencer Park, Wandsworth, London, England SW18 2SY</p>  <p>NEUTEL/BOOTSMA: Walter and Ineke Neutel, Ottawa, Ont., and Ted and Corrie Bootsma, Willowdale, Ont., are pleased to announce the marriage of</p> <p>REBECCA and JOEL D.V., on July 1, 1997, in Ottawa, Ont. Future address: 166 Holmwood, North York, ON M2M 1K5</p>	<p>40th Anniversary June 21</p> <p>HARRY and FRANCES COOK (HOYTEMA)</p> <p>With joy and thanks to the Lord, we celebrate the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents. We hope that God will continue to bless you with health and happiness in the years to come. Lots of love from your family, George & Katie Cook — Guelph</p> <p>Matthew Gary & Laura Cook — London Ben, Chris Marty & John Brouwer — London Rachel, Jenna, Kelly Home address: 1510 North Vernon Ave., London, ON N5X 1N8</p> <p>1947 June 20 1997 "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (Phil 4:4). 50th wedding anniversary JOHN and HELENA HANSMA (nee RINGELBURG) We, their children, thank God for 50 years of love, and commitment to each other and to us their family Corrie & Sam Hogeterp — Hamilton, Ont. Frank & Ruth Hansma — Calgary, Alta. Henry & Marian Hansma — Strathmore, Alta. Steve & Marge Hansma — Abbotsford, B.C. John & Heather Hansma — Calgary, Alta. Arnold & Sylvie Hansma — Burlington, Ont. Janet & Joe Paulette — Fort Smith, N.W.T. 23 grandchildren and one great-grandchild. We wish to invite friends and family to an open house reception in their honor, to be held, D.V., on Saturday, July 5, 1997, from 2-4 p.m., in the Zion United Ref. Church, Hwy. 8, Sheffield, Ont.</p> <p>1957 June 22 1997 It is with great joy and thankfulness to the Lord that we celebrate with our parents, their 40th anniversary.</p> <p>JOHN and CAROL MIDDEL (nee TAPPING) We thank God for them and pray that He will bless them, and us, with many more years together. With love from: Ron & Glenna Middel Brent, Tanya, Cameron Brenda & Andy Haayema Scott, Brandon Christine & Chris Bailey Kendall, Taylor Steve & Jenny Middel Ryan, Nicole, Jessica "For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations" (Ps. 100:5). Home address: R.R. 4, Aylmer, ON N5H 2R3</p>	<p>1957 June 21 1997 With thankfulness to God for His faithfulness we announce the anniversary of our parents and grandparents.</p> <p>JACK and MARGARET TIGCHELAAR Congratulations Dad and Mom, Grandpa and Grandma! With much love from your family, Ken & Alice Tigchelaar — Ancaster, Ont. Alexander, Jennifer, Matthew Len & Sherry Tigchelaar — Binbrook, Ont. Melissa, Aimee, Michael, Nicholas Arlene & Peter Wyngaarden — Elmira, Ont. Joshua, Jeffrey, Sara Jim & Mary Jane Tigchelaar — Dundas, Ont. Jacob, Abby Home address: 136 Parkview Avenue, Dundas, ON L9H 5X7</p> <p>Obituaries</p> <p>Voorthuizen Onilia the Neth. Ont. Nov. 4, 1936 - May 23, 1997 "Now we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling" (2 Cor. 5:1,2). After a lengthy illness, the Lord took home His child</p> <p>EVA KRUUF Dear wife of Hank Kruyf, Onilia, Ont. Mom and Oma of: Sherry & Karl Fournier — Midland, Ont. Brittney, Ashley Rick Kruyf & Rachel — Oakwood, Ont. Teo Chris Kruyf — Onilia, Ont. The funeral was held at the Onilia Chr. Ref. Church, Rev. R. Nanninga officiating. Correspondence address: 261 Nottawasaga St., Onilia, ON L3V 3K5</p> <p>On May 23, 1997, our dear sister</p> <p>EVA KRUUF was called home by our Lord, after a long illness. Our thoughts and prayers are with Hank, children and grandchildren. May God comfort and surround you all. Psalm 23. Bert & Anne VandeKuyt — Onilia, Ont. Maria & John Verschoor — Mount Hope, Ont. Corrie & Bert VanderHoef — Willowdale, Ont. Wilma & John Ten Brinke — Dunnville, Ont. Harry & Ann VandeKuyt — Ancaster, Ont. George & Liz VandeKuyt — Mount Hope, Ont. John & Jana VandeKuyt — Burlington, Ont. and many nephews and nieces.</p>	<p>Single male, 28 years old, is seeking a Christian female, between 21-33, for a serious relationship. Children welcome. Must be a committed Christian. Please send picture. Respond to: 36 Coverdale Avenue, Cobourg, ON K9A 4H3</p> <p>ONE TO ANOTHER Christian companion magazine Hundreds of readers Canada-wide Single issue \$5. Write to: #12 923 2nd Ave. S. Lethbridge, AB T1J 0C7</p> <p>Job Opportunities</p> <p>Interested in living in Holland, for one year? Job opportunity for mature English speaking nanny to care for 3 children in Wassenaar (near The Hague and beaches) effective Aug. 15. Knowledge of Dutch language not required. Insurance paid, 30 hrs. per week, 500 guilders per month. Questions? Call Ineke Bezuyen at (905) 562-7887.</p> <p>Summer Job Market</p> <p>A 19-year-old Redeemer College student is looking for a summer job indoors or outdoors. I am skilled in computers, accounting, etc., and have experience in home maintenance. If you have a job for me, call Jimmy Vermeer at (905) 383-0119, Hamilton, Ont.</p> <p>My parents are missionaries in Honduras. I am hoping to start classes at Calvin College this September. I am available for summer work in Ontario on June 23. I can work with small power tools after a previous summer in construction. I also have computer skills in most computer programs. In addition, I have my Bronze Medallion in swimming. Please call Jordan Kater collect in Honduras at (504) 37-1485.</p> <p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>Peter Van 't Bosch would like to locate Rudy and Jopie Bast. Peter and Rudy were farm hands at Kingsborough, P.E.I., in 1952/53. If you know Rudy call or write Peter at: (403) 845-3532, Box 14, Site 9, R.R. #1, Rocky Mountain House, AB T0M 1T0.</p>



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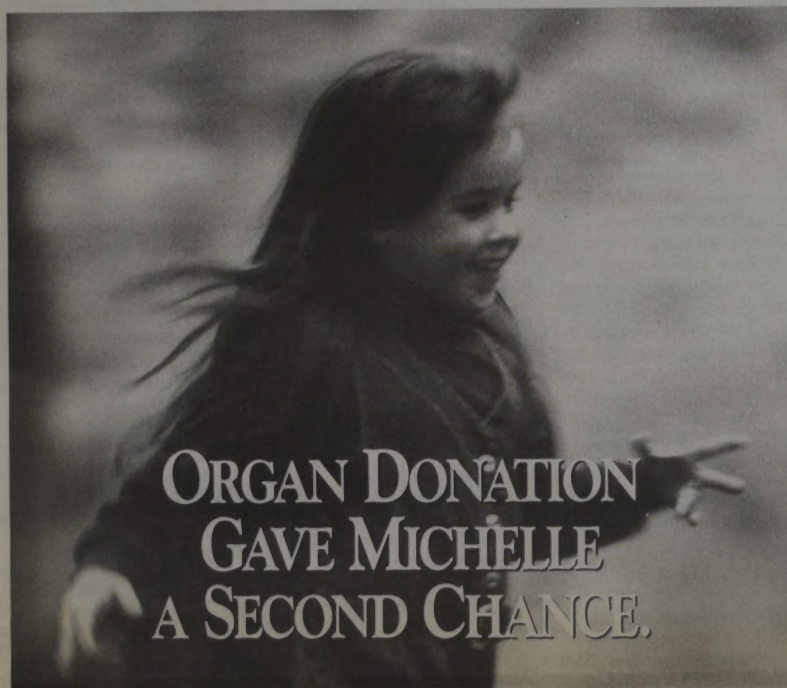
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<p align="center">For Rent</p> <p>For Rent in Friesland, Holland. Pleasantly furnished private vacation home in Oenkerk, 10 km from Leeuwarden, situated in an attractive country setting. Will accommodate up to 5 people. Large living room, live-in-kitchen, 2 bedrooms and outside terrace. \$300 to \$450 per week. Call or write: D. Jullens, Rengersweg 75, 9062 EC Oenkerk, the Netherlands; 011-31-582-562600.</p>		<p align="center"><i>Please take advantage of our monthly Business Directory. For a low cost of \$25 (plus 7% G.S.T.) you can advertise your business.</i></p>
<p>For rent: Fully furnished apartment. Suitable for one or two persons. In the town of Lindsay, Ont. Phone (705) 324-2385</p>		<p align="center">We love early birds!</p>  <p align="right">Renew your CC subscription now!</p>
<p align="center">Vacations</p> <p>GOING TO HOLLAND FOR VACATION? Why not rent a VACATION APARTMENT and visit family and sight-see at your leisure. CENTRALLY LOCATED near APELDOORN. Year-round accommodations. FOR BROCHURE OR MORE INFORMATION CALL Harold or Nellie at (905) 985-7891 or fax us at (905) 985-3007 e-mail: hamel@idirect.com</p>	<p align="center"></p> <p align="center">EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC) -U.S.</p> <p>The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC), an agency of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America, is seeking applicants for the position of U.S. Executive Director. The person chosen for this position will lead a team that is responsible for the administration and implementation of the ministry of CRWRC throughout the world. This Executive Director will also participate in the promotion of CRWRC's ministry among the membership of the CRC and other supporters, and maintain an effective co-operative relationship with many other agencies and organizations. The person chosen for this position will have an appropriate educational background (College, Graduate School). Experience in management, Christian international development, not-for-profit organizations, and organizational leadership are preferred qualifications.</p> <p>To be considered for this position, please submit by August 15, 1997, a copy of your resume and a letter stating your interest to:</p> <p align="center">Mr. Calvin J. Hulst, President Christian Reformed World Relief Committee - U.S. c/o Christian Reformed Church in North America 2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49560 (616) 224-0832/Fax (616) 224-5895 e-mail: tpml@novagate.com</p>	<p>Our Circulation Manager is at her job every day trying to keep our subscriptions up to date. We spend thousands of dollars each year in postage sending out renewal notices, reminders, etc. To top it off, Canada Post charges us an extra fee for using the handy business-reply envelopes we make available. This means that in order to get a subscription renewed we have to pay close to \$1.00 in postage alone!</p> <p>The computer label on your <i>Christian Courier</i> copy shows the month in which your subscription is due. If your label shows that your subscription is due two or three months from now, kindly consider sending us the renewal fee ahead of time. This way, you will be assured that C.C. will be coming to you regularly, as well as saving us time and postage expenses!</p> <p>Be an early bird! We appreciate your co-operation. Please use the coupon below when sending us your renewal fee.</p> <p align="center">COUPON</p> <p>Please renew my C.C. subscription for the period indicated: <input type="checkbox"/> one-year renewal. Enclosed is \$43.50 (\$35.00 U.S.) <input type="checkbox"/> two-year renewal. Enclosed is \$82.00 (\$66.00 U.S.) <input type="checkbox"/> three-year renewal. Enclosed is \$123.00 (\$99.00 U.S.)</p> <p>Name _____ Address _____ City/Town _____ Code _____</p> <p>P.S. If possible, glue your label in this space, or enclose it. Send to: 4-261 Martindale Road, St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p>
<p align="center">Teachers</p> <p>FRUITLAND, Ont.: John Knox Memorial Chr. School invites applications for a 50% part-time music teacher for the 1997-1998 school year. The ideal candidate will possess a valid provincial or state teacher certificate, a Christian School Teacher Certificate (CSTC) and have several years of successful experience teaching music at the Grade 4 to 8 levels. Persons interested in this position should contact: Mr. J. de Jager, Principal at (905) 643-2460 In order to receive application forms. Applications will be received until the position has been filled.</p>		

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Travel	Miscellaneous	Church News
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<p>Miscellaneous</p>	<p>Country Boutique "by Kiers"</p> <p>* Taking orders for bridesmaid dresses. * We carry Mother-of-the-Bride dresses and will sell yours on consignment (provided they are in mint condition, are in style and have been dry-cleaned) * We also have a nice line of Sunday dresses (size range 8 to 24).</p> <p>Serving you in a home atmosphere. 4076 Canboro Rd., R.R. #3, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0; (905) 386-6139</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS NEED CHRISTIAN TEXTBOOKS</p> <p>The CCEF supports the cost of developing Christian textbooks for your local school.</p> <p>Your financial support will help us in our publishing program. Your gifts are tax deductible.</p> <p>CANADIAN CHRISTIAN EDUCATION FOUNDATION INC.</p> <p></p> <p>Fred R. Vander Velde Executive Director</p> <p>2621 Cavendish Drive Burlington, ON L7P 3W6 (905) 336-5619, day or evening.</p>
<p>Support Reformed Faith Witness (RFW)</p> <p>Mission Statement: <i>Reformed Faith Witness is a Christian ministry committed to communicate biblical perspectives on current and world events in accordance with Reformed traditions.</i></p> <p>Make a donation for 1997!</p> <p>Reformed Faith Witness, the new publisher of <i>Christian Courier</i>, is a charitable organization which received tax exempt status from Revenue Canada. Please consider making a financial gift for 1997. All contributions will be used to help <i>Christian Courier</i> and the cause of Reformed Christian journalism. Send your cheque and complete the coupon below and we will issue an official receipt. Thank you very much!</p>	<p>FRISIAN PICNIC</p> <p>TUESDAY, JULY 1, 1997 starting at 11 a.m. at Pinehurst Conservation Park, Paris, Ont. on Highway 24A (4 miles north of Paris).</p> <p></p>	<p>COUPON</p> <p>To: Reformed Faith Witness Registration No. 1092873-47 4-261 Martindale Road St. Catharines, ON L2W 1A1</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Yes, please enter my/our name on your mailing list and keep me/us informed about Reformed Faith Witness. <input type="checkbox"/> I/we enclose a donation payable to Reformed Faith Witness. Please send receipt.</p> <p>Name: _____ Amount: _____ Address: _____ City/Town: _____ Code: _____</p> <p>P.S.: CC subscription and advertising payments are not tax deductible. Only amounts of \$10 or over clearly designated to <i>Reformed Faith Witness</i> will be officially receipted.</p>
	<p>Canadian CRC restructuring at Synod 1997 would dismantle the CCRCC</p> <p>That's the proposed answer to persistent requests for a regional synod for Canada.</p> <p>• The new director of Canadian ministries will report to and be responsible to the USA executive director of ministries. • Canadian denominational agencies will ultimately report to a synod overwhelmingly (75%) USA dominated. • Thirty years of a little progress in self-determination for the Canadian churches will be lost.</p> <p>At Synod, PLEASE VOTE NO!</p> <p><i>Keep the CCRCC and give it enhanced responsibilities for Canadian charities of the churches.</i></p> <p>— advertisement —</p>	

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Miscellaneous



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Calendar of Events

Please submit only brief items. Placement is subject to space availability. Lengthy, multiple-event announcements will be rejected. We reserve the right to edit the material and to charge a nominal, per issue fee per item inserted.

- June 18 "Cypress Gardens Winter Ministry (Florida)" picnic, 10 a.m., Southside Park, Woodstock, Ont. Info.: (519) 475-4946.
- June 21 "Grunneger Picnic," 10 a.m., Grand River Conservation Authority Park, Rockwood, Ont. Info.: (519) 235-0719.
- June 24 Organ recital by Jonathan Oldengarm, 12 noon, St. Paul's Anglican Cathedral, London, Ont. Info.: (519) 725-9514.
- July 1 Frisian picnic, 11 a.m., Pinehurst Conservation Park, Paris, Ont. (On Hwy. 24A, 4 miles north of Paris). (#)
- July 13 Dutch worship service led by Rev. H.A. Vander Windt, 3 p.m., CRC, Ancaster, Ont.
- July 13 Dutch worship service led by Rev. J.D. Hellinga, 3 p.m., CRC, Aylmer, Ont. Info.: (519) 773-3025.
- July 14-19 Summerfest at Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Mich. For complete details phone Calvin at (616) 957-6142 (#).
- July 14-Aug. 1 Summer school at Wycliffe College and the ICS, Toronto, Ont. For brochure and registration details contact Chris Barrigar at (416) 979-2870, fax (416) 979-5668 or e-mail: c.barrigar@utoronto.ca. (#)

A guide to culture according to 1 Corinthians 13

Rick Jongejan, a teacher working in Haiti for CRWRC, sent us this version of 1 Corinthians 13. It was an e-mail posting circulating among missionaries in Haiti. It spells out the difficult demands of love when working in a foreign country.

If I speak with the tongue of a national, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

If I wear the national dress and understand the culture and all forms of etiquette, and if I copy all mannerisms so that I could pass for a national but have not love, I am nothing.

If I give all I possess to the poor, and if I spend my energy without reserve, but have not love, I gain nothing.

Love endures long hours of language study, and is kind to those who mock his accent; love does not envy those who stayed home; love does not exalt his home culture, is not proud of his national superiority, does not boast about the way we do it back home, does not seek his own ways, is not easily provoked into telling about the beauty of his home country, does

not think evil about this culture.

Love bears all criticism about his home culture, believes all good things about this new culture, confidently anticipates being at home in this place, endures all inconveniences.

Love never fails: but where there is cultural anthropology, it will fail; where there is contextualization it will lead to syncretism; where there is linguistics, it will change.

For we know only part of the culture and we minister to only part.

But when Christ is reproduced in this culture, then our inadequacies will be insignificant.

When I was in America I spoke as an American, I understood as an American, I thought as an American; but when I left America I put away American things.

Now we adapt to this culture awkwardly; but He will live in it intimately; now I speak with a strange accent, but he will speak to the heart.

And now these three remain: cultural adaptation, language study, and love.

But the greatest of these is love.

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News

Alpha program meets opposition

Alan Doerksen

TORONTO, NIAGARA FALLS, Ont. — Since its birth in an Anglican parish in England 18 years ago, the Alpha program has become a successful evangelism tool that is being used by at least 4,000 churches around the world (see CC, Sept. 27, 1996). But the program's focus on the Holy Spirit and manifestations of the Spirit has caused divisions in some churches.

The Alpha program is a 15-session introduction to Christianity designed especially for non-churchgoers and new Christians. Part of Alpha focuses on the Holy Spirit. Participants discuss questions such as: Who is the Holy Spirit? What does the Holy Spirit do? How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit? Clergy in charge of the program sometimes pray that participants will receive an in-filling of the Holy Spirit.

Two classes of believers

Recently, one Anglican church in Toronto that offered Alpha suspended its program because its parishioners had sharply differing views about how to deal with manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Ven. Harry Hilchey, priest in charge of St. Paul's Anglican Church, explains that some participants at the St. Paul program were "slain in the Spirit," but "some of those who have been prayed for have had no manifestations of the Holy Spirit.... That has caused some individuals to feel puzzled, dismayed." Some people feel there are two classes of Christians: those who manifest the Spirit and those who don't.

Another problem, Hilchey



Ven. Harry Hilchey

explains, is a perceived link between Alpha and the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship, a church famous for manifestations such as laughter and being "slain in the Spirit." But Hilchey denies any connection between Alpha and that church.

Specific guidelines

St. Paul's has dealt with this situation by suspending its Alpha program and developing a series of guidelines for the church to use if it offers Alpha again in the future. The church's Alpha Review Group made these recommendations to the parish:

- that each participant in an Alpha program be interviewed by one of the parish clergy, the interview to include conversations about the individual's expectations of Alpha;
- that at least one of the parish clergy be present at each Alpha session;
- that prayer for the Holy Spirit be done in a communal situation rather than an individual laying on of hands;
- that those requesting personal prayer wait until after the main session, and that these opportunities for prayer be handled in a private way;
- during the time of communal prayer in the Holy Spirit session, the people should sit or kneel to receive prayers.

Adapt to comfort level

The Alpha Review Group also expressed its concern that some parishioners have "a suspicion that there are those among us who want to see changes to the traditional worship at St. Paul's, so as to give it a much stronger charismatic or Pentecostal emphasis."

While some parishioners feel discontinuing Alpha is "a tragic

mistake," the review group suggests in its report that others "have found certain aspects of their Alpha experience manipulative, hurtful and even traumatic."

Hilchey comments on the guidelines that an individual interviewed before joining Alpha should also be asked "what instruction he or she has had about the person of the Holy Spirit."

The suggestion of communal prayer for the Holy Spirit would avoid the situation of singling out those who manifest the Spirit and those who don't. The idea of sitting or kneeling for prayer would avoid the phenomenon of someone prayed for falling backwards, which sometimes happens when one is "slain in the Spirit," explains Hilchey.

"The program must be suited to the comfort level of the congregation," Hilchey insists. This should affect what emphasis is put on the Holy Spirit and also what types of music are used.



Rev. Nicky Gumbel developed Alpha into an effective outreach program used around the world.

Hilchey attended two Alpha sessions at St. Paul's and comments, "I don't like the music ... but that's a matter of taste." Music at those Alpha sessions featured electric guitars, and Hilchey prefers classical music.

Of the two Alpha programs presented at St. Paul's, the first one attracted mostly people from within the church, but the second one "tended to bring in people from beyond the congregation," Hilchey observes.

Focus on fruit

Alpha has caught on with Anglican congregations from Victoria to St. John's, Nfld., and also with Baptist, Vineyard and Salvation Army congregations.

One church that has had a



Dr. Joe Eden

more positive experience of Alpha is St. John the Evangelist Anglican Church in Niagara Falls, Ont. The church started offering the program in Sept. 1995, and has had six sessions so far. The seventh session is about to start.

Dr. Joe Eden, president of Alpha at St. John's, says the program has had a good response at his church. But he adds, "Some people are leery about anything that's new.... We have to be rather sensitive about it."

Eden's church tends to focus on "the fruit of the Spirit rather than the gifts of the Spirit," he explains. "We tend to scale down the manifestations of the Spirit."

Positive habits

One goal of Alpha is to bring new people into the church, Eden notes, but he cautions that it is important not to disturb people who are already part of the church. Although his church offers a weekend focused on the Holy Spirit, participants can opt out of it and other sessions. Eden approves of the guidelines being considered by St. Paul's church in Toronto.

Some positive results of Alpha are: "It gets people in the habit of daily Bible reading," says Eden. In the small group environment of Alpha, participants can get to know each other better and "open up" to each other.

Alpha was started 18 years ago by Charles Marnham, a clergyman at Holy Trinity Brompton, near London, England. In 1991, Rev. Nicky Gumbel, the present curate of Holy Trinity, took over the program and developed it into an effective outreach program that has since caught on around the world.

News Digest

Spain most sinful

TORONTO — Spain is the most sinful of the industrialized nations, according to a Swedish business journal. *Svensk Export Strategi* ranked 19 nations on the seven "modern deadly sins" of smoking, drinking, drugs, gambling, over-eating, night life and prostitution.

Spain comes first mainly because of its night life and gambling. France is second because of high alcohol consumption, and the United States is third because of drugs, Britain and the Netherlands round out the top five.

Grandmother arrested for kindness

CINCINNATI, Ohio — Recently, well-known advice columnist Ann Landers received a letter from a reader extolling the virtues of Random Acts of Senseless Kindness. In Landers' response, she agreed, "Your suggestion of random acts of kindness is inspiring, but if you are in Cincinnati, here's one you should avoid: Putting quarters in the meter to prevent some stranger from getting a ticket. A grandmother in Cincinnati did just that and was arrested and charged with disorderly conduct for obstructing official police business. It seems that putting money in an expired meter is against the law in Cincinnati."

Computer expert claims Bible code

NEW YORK — *The Bible Code* is a newly published book which claims that an Israeli computer expert has discovered a code in the Old Testament which predicts such events as the recent assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

In the book, author Michael Drosnin explains that Eliyahu Rips, a respected Israeli computer expert and mathematician, took all the words in the Torah and turned them into one continuous strand about 305,000 letters long. Rips searched for a skip code that takes every fourth letter (for example) to form a word. Drosnin says the code produced connected information, such as a link between the name Hitler and the word Nazi. Drosnin claims the code also predicted the assassination of Rabin.

